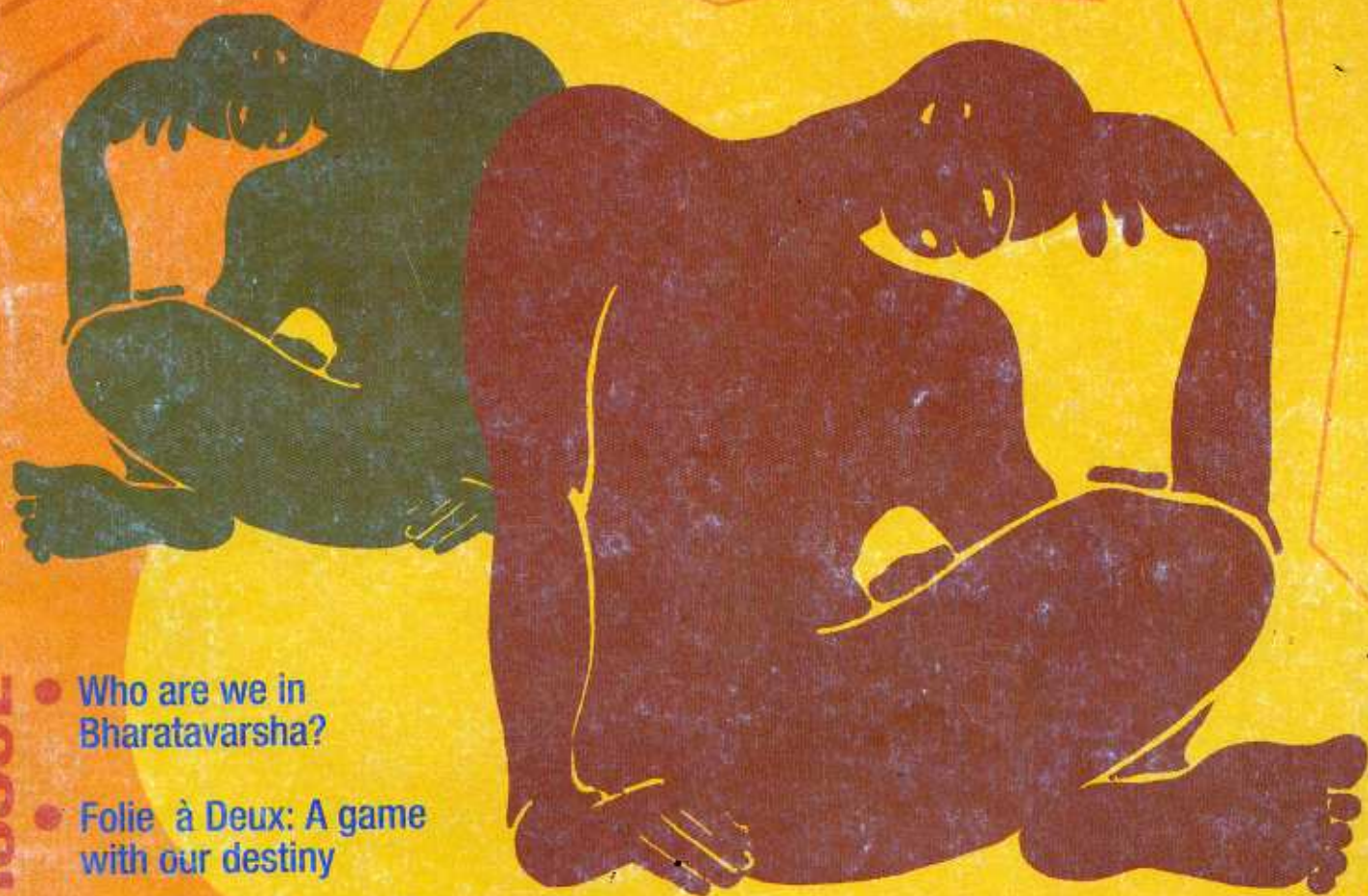


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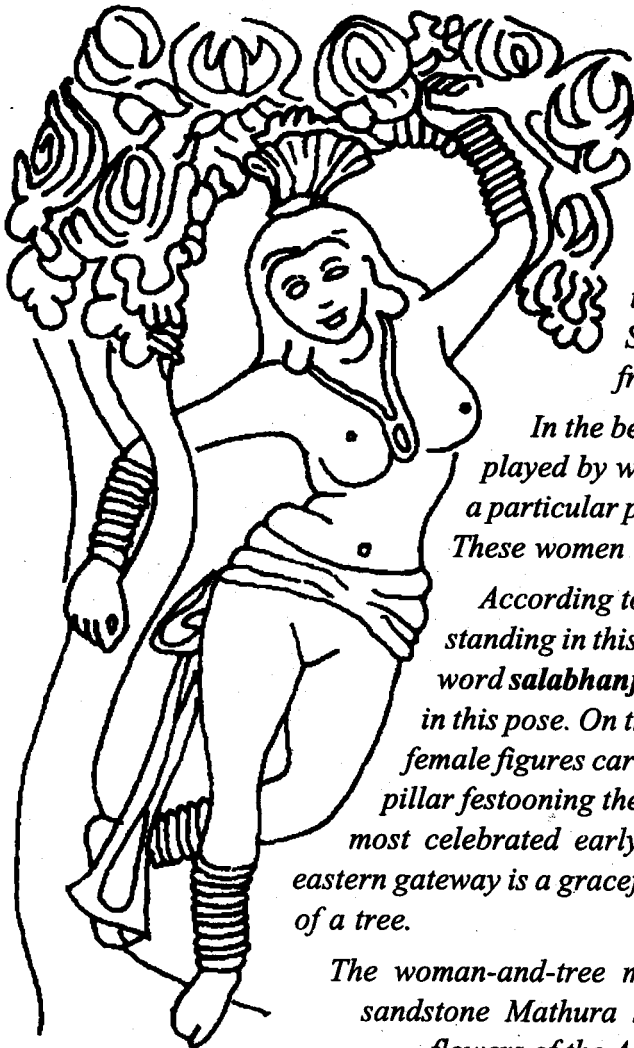
DOUBLE ISSUE

- Who are we in Bharatavarsha?
- Folie à Deux: A game with our destiny
- Marma Chikitsa  
The secret massage system of India
- Growthmania
- Twenties' Musings

# The Dispossessed and the Consumed

## SCULPTURE OF THE ISSUE

# SALABHANJIKA



*Salabhanjika*  
Sanchi, Eastern torana, Satavahana,  
2nd century BC.

*This is a sculpture representing a girl gathering the flowers of a sala tree. She stands close to the tree in the classic pose of a tree goddess. It is also the name of the tree-nymph herself.*

*The role of a woman in nature has been poetically expressed in the motif of **salabhanjika** or 'woman and tree', and depicted in the 2nd cent. B.C sculptures at Sanchi, Bharhut and Bodhgaya. It is a theme that frequently occurs in ancient and medieval sculpture.*

*In the beginning, **salabhanjika** was the name of a garden sport played by women. Under a blossoming sala tree, women stood in a particular pose under low bending boughs overladen with flowers. These women came to be known as **salabhanjikas**.*

*According to Pali accounts, the Buddha's mother, Maya Devi was standing in this pose when the Buddha was born. In course of time, the word **salabhanjika** became a conventional term for a woman standing in this pose. On the **stupa** gateways of Bharhut, Sanchi and Mathura the female figures carved between the horizontal architraves and the upright pillar festooning the corners, became known as **torana-salabhanjika**. The most celebrated early sculpture of a **salabhanjika** is at Sanchi. On the eastern gateway is a graceful female figure swaying majestically from the branch of a tree.*

*The woman-and-tree motif found its most elegant expression in the red sandstone Mathura sculptures of the Kushana period. The leaves and flowers of the Ashoka tree were the most popular. The delicate beauty of these nymphs and dryads has a charm of its own that cannot be matched by the sculptures of self-standing female figures in classical Indian art. The tree in blossom lends charm to the beautiful female figure. Beauty of nature combined with the beauty of the female form is the basis of the worship of the earth goddess. The threefold fixation or the **tribhanga** pose of the female figure with her sensuous curves further elevates the aesthetic quality of the **salabhanjika**.*

Prabhakar Begde

Illustration: *Living Sculpture* by the same author

*We begin our new series on **Indian Sculpture** starting with this issue. There are three other features on the different types of **salabhanjikas** distributed through the issue, thus completing this particular series. The next issue will carry another concept of Indian sculpture.*





**Editor**  
Rohini Sekhar

**Subscriptions & Admin.**  
Asha Doodhar

**Production Assistance**  
Annanya Dasgupta  
Praseeda Gopinath

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# LETTERS

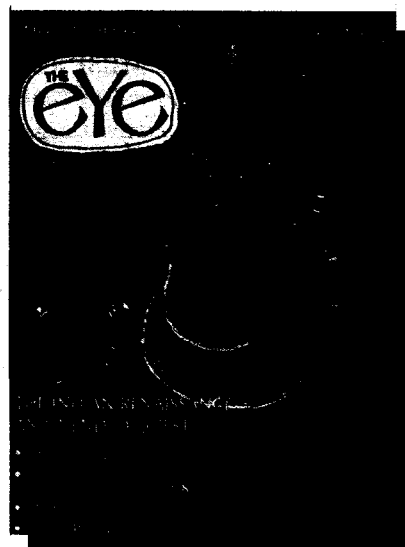
Dear Editor,

Your issue on an *Indian Renaissance* was intensely stimulating. Please keep the exploration alive. Fortunately, it was not a debate. On such issues debates are wasteful while explorations may pave the way for new insights. Insights may provide the mosaic for new myths to form and inspire new action.

Myths guide the formation of beliefs which in turn lead to action. Actions, not proclamations demonstrate the real beliefs. If India as a collectivity were to be likened to an individual, the post independence period gives a clear canvas of the pattern of beliefs. A thousand years of persistent oppression and then a sudden release in 1947! Victor Frankl's study of concentration camp inmates clearly indicates the pattern. The sudden release created a setting in which 'they became the perpetrators of wilful force and injustice. They justified their behaviours by their own terrible past.'

Father Gregorios, Dinesh Mohan and S.C. Shukla's papers tell the whole story. Techno-economic and socio-political dimensions are the only ones that western planning systems address themselves to. So do our intellectuals, finally leading to their futile assault on the Indian identity itself. The insights the above authors have provided, are substantial and considerable. The west is caught in the grip of technology and cannot get off the speeding train. Perhaps it is for us Indians to show the way. However, we are caught in the grip of an archaic mode, that of 'correcting the situation', be it removing poverty or the ills of Brahminical dogma. As any behavioural scientist will tell you, attempts to remove ills of the past is like falling into quicksand, the more you struggle the more you sink. We need a new vision based on what we can do rather than what we should do and end up aping the West.

In the post independence era, all



visions that acquired the status of a national philosophy were based on removing past ills. Of course the whole scenario was founded on the assumption that the nation as a whole is sick. The fact was and still is that the nation as a whole carried the scars of untold brutality, oppression and violence. This has been the greatest curse that our erstwhile oppressors have left behind. No leader has been able to provide a vision — a dream that can be held by the collectivity. In such a vacuum has stepped in the western econo-political net (Toynbee) and brought in what Dinesh Mohan protests about in his paper, and I agree wholeheartedly with him on this score.

Stratification of societies is an inevitable product of the choice of that society to undertake complex tasks, else tribal societies emerge, egalitarian and closely interwoven with nature. Why are all Indian processes and structures of stratification so hateful? Is American poverty any more beautiful?

India is perhaps the only nation in the world which is equipped in its psyche with the capability of shrugging off the western mythologies of infinite progress, the pleasure principle and their consequent media dream of eternal happiness through unlimited consumption and acquisition. The West has, in its slavery to technology made the earth its enemy, (conquest of nature, whether internal or external).

The last fifty years or so have intensified self hate in all of us — the

youth today demonstrate it intensively by turning to senseless consumerism or fanaticism. Hope and faith being the chief casualties.

Perhaps a serious task for all of us is to ask the question what is it that we want — to follow the West and wallow in self hate or define a new vision?

I propose to you that in further exploring the issue of rejuvenating the Indian identity you dedicate an issue on a 'vision for India.'

**Sushanta Banerjee**  
P-7, Haus Khas Enclave  
New Delhi-110016

Dear Editor

The poems by Neerada Suresh in Vol.3 No.4 were very good. Simple and observant.

Recently I attended one day of the three-day workshop on *Sharing Benefits with Indigenous People* organised by the Centre for Science and Environment. Here are some of my concerns.

What is common between the potato, quinine and chocolates?

Sorry! I'm not going to give you the answer. Actually, you ought to know. It is what is common between the fast food industry, pharmaceutical industry and the processed food industry. Lots of money, lots of jobs and lots of agencies. The Amazonian Indians who gave the world potatoes, quinine and cocoa get no jobs, no benefits and the Amazonian forests are getting denuded at an alarming rate. The same can be applied to India with regard to knowledge of herbal medicines, crop varieties, seeds and so on. Knowledge acquired through generations of trial and error. *Neem* and *haldi* and *basmati* rice.....

With the introduction of intellectual property rights, WTO, GATT, knowledge is being proprietised. We have a situation where the knowledge of the poor is free and available for all, while the knowledge of the rich is costly, unavailable and protected under Intellectual Property Rights.....The knowledge of the poor is being protected



in CD ROMS/INTERNET etc.....far far away.

**Hari Parmeshwar**  
390, Nilgiri Apartments  
Alakananda, New Delhi 110019

Dear Editor

This is with reference to K.Saradmoni's article, *Women — Building Nations*. I would like to make the following submission with respect to both the caste and gender heirarchy which the author alludes to.

I submit that the caste system has taken on the mantle of the educated caste, i.e the educated class is now a modern Indian caste. That this new caste is urban is self evident and it manifests all the ills associated with

the urban-western interests, which are the exercising of rights of access (the Land Aquisition Act) to all rural and tribal assets in the name of 'national interests', in the process, ignoring their rights over sacred sites, culture and lifestyle. It has disastrous consequences on rural and tribal women.

In the same issue, with regard to Prof. Bhim Dahiya's article, *Educating the Market versus The Market of Education*, I would like to say the following. That the old form of education as traditions which are handed down from generation to generation is dying out daily. It is being substituted by the indoctrinated form of educated urban society with an eye to utilise the fullest immediate

short term advantage of natural resources. Do we call this type of society 'nation builders'?

I would like to convey my deep admiration and respect to Jay Griffiths on the most wonderful article on 'speed' as an excuse for excellence and its antithesis. I found it amazingly well written.

Shalina Mehta's article on mass communication — I feel it imperative to realise that the tribals and traditional Hindu societies need to be 'protected' from the ever degrading media. We must stop seing their lifestyles as poverty. I recommend that you read *The Way* by Edward Goldsmith. ॐ

**Bulu Imam**  
Hazaribagh  
Bihar.

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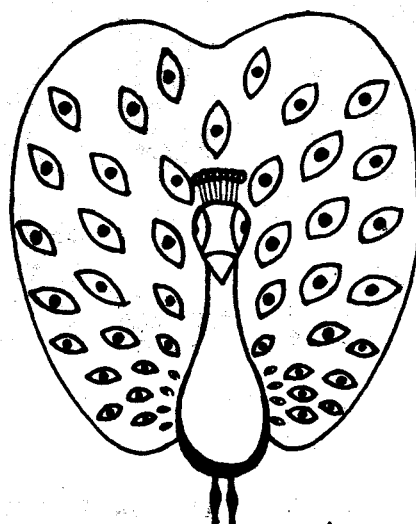
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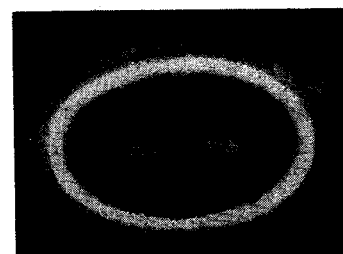
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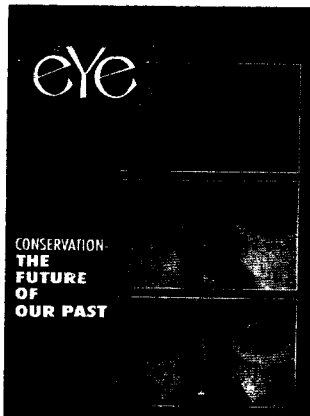


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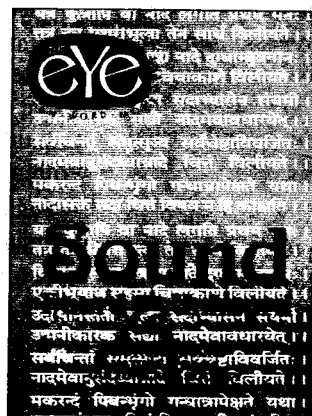


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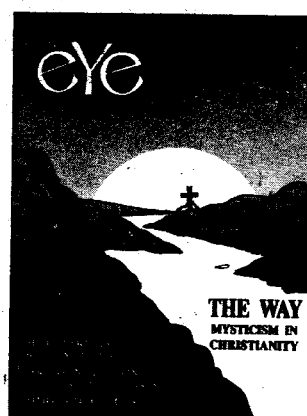
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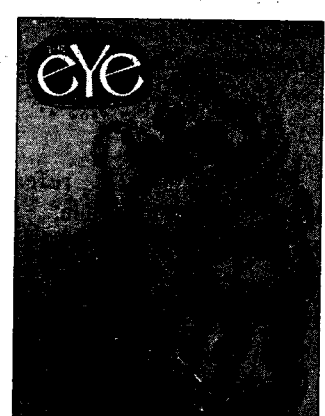
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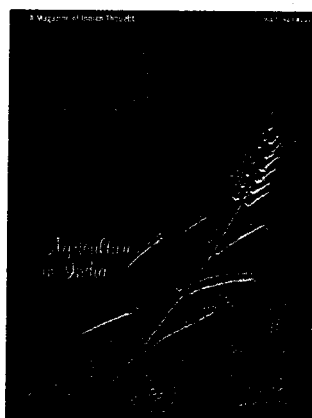
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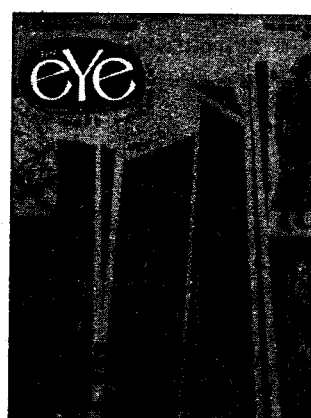
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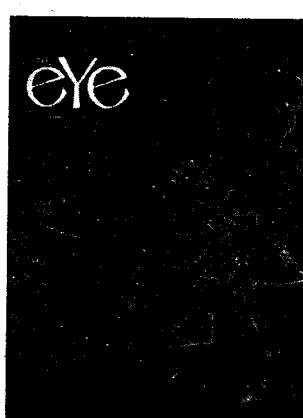
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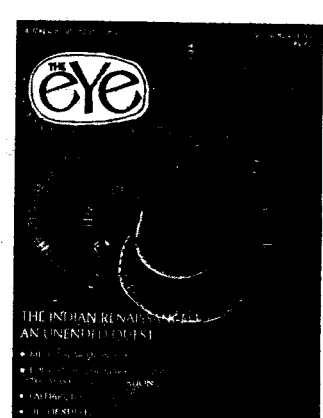
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THE EYE VOL. 4 NO. 1&2



*THE EYE* was born four years ago, shrouded in uncertainty. Most organisations celebrate their tenth or twentieth year of existence, but we feel the need to affirm and endorse every maddeningly challenging passing year. We have had to mutate several times in order to try and make this 'small journal' a 'big' concept, to survive in a world quite different from what we believe in. Through all this, our loyal band of supporters have stood by us, illustrating, guest editing, writing, disseminating and subscribing. We have tried to live up to their expectations by setting stringent standards of quality for ourselves.

For the first time, *THE EYE* brings you a double issue. And a 'themeless' one at that. For two reasons, one to carry all those wonderful articles on a variety of subjects that have been pouring in, and two, to try and catch up with our backlog. We have packed it with enough material to hopefully tide you over till the next issue.

In our last issue, *The Indian Renaissance - An Unended Quest*, we looked at a wide range of 'issues' that needed to be addressed if we, as Indians should recover from the torpor and lethargy of the 'dark ages' that we are currently in. Though many would argue otherwise. We often pride ourselves on being an 'Asian Tiger', our flanks tight, poised for the kill. But what are we really killing? Economic imperialism or economic freedom? Sanity or madness? But alas, this would demand many reams of paper and several sore throats and solutions would still be far.

This current issue looks more specifically at the human being to whom we appeal increasingly to make an appropriate and considered judgement on what is relevant to enlightened living. This is enhanced by a reflection of our particular place in the culture of this subcontinent. Makarand Paranjape, in his commentary on Aurobindo's *Foundations of Indian Culture* contrasts what Gandhi calls a cowardly non-violence with aggressive *ahimsa*. We must nurture what we have even if it means confrontation. Rev. Paulos Mar Gregorios, in his brilliant article, *Who Are We In Bharatavarsha Today - Questions About Our Own Identity and Self-Understanding* - maintains that 'neither the white man's identity nor our own identity awareness will be on a secure basis until we have disentangled the identity skeins that have got all tangled up in the last three centuries'. In similar vein is Sushanta Banerjee's *Folie à Deux* where he talks about the new 'problems of meaninglessness' often tightly wound up in modernist crises of identification, keeping psychiatrists in happy business. And now that we have turned into growthmaniacs and consummate consumers, we nibble away, like goats, at our own peace of mind, keeping good health successfully at bay. S. Anandalakshmy creates a metaphor for healthy living, suggesting a mind-turnabout rather than mind-manipulation.

The menu for this issue is at once bitterly remorseful, tangily witty, and spicily exciting. What it is not is fruitily mellow. It covers art, some really sophisticated eco-literature, and musings by our very own twenty somethings. We want our readers to watch out for some of our new volunteer-illustrators, all in their early twenties.

We hope this double issue will reduce equanimity, increase frustration and promote gnashing of teeth! We also hope that it shreds whatever complacency we may have chosen to shelter under! Whatever it does, I hope it stimulates you. It certainly kept us going.

*Sushanta Banerjee*

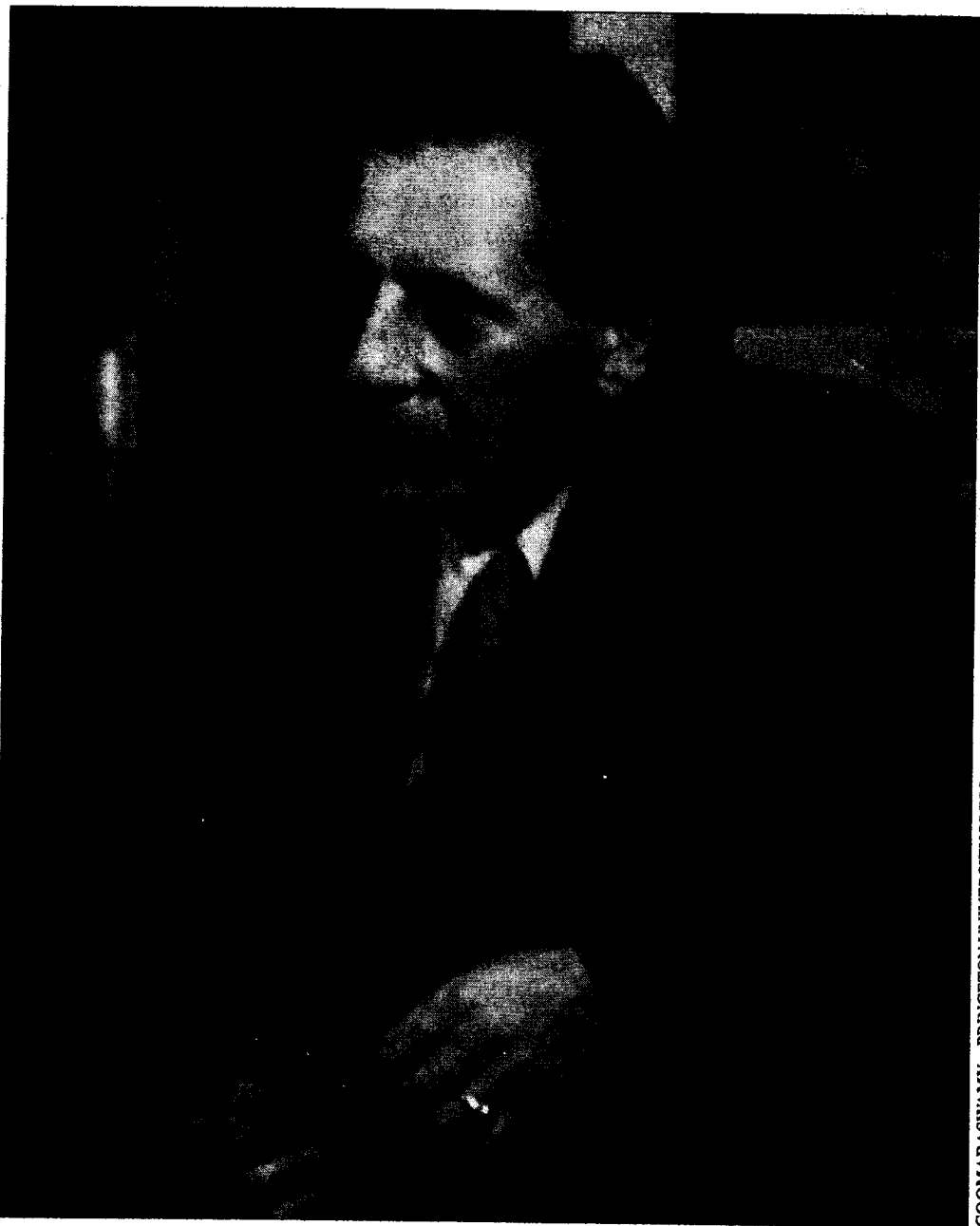
EDITORIAL  
*Tribute*

# ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

PRABHAKAR BEGDE

*Ninety nine years ago in the month of August was born a great scholar and philosopher who was instrumental in drawing the world's attention towards Indian civilisation. He died in the month of September.*

*We dedicate this autumn issue to him.*



COOMARASWAMY — PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS



**“N**ations are created by poets and artists”, said Ananda Coomaraswamy, “not by merchants and politicians. In art lie the deepest life-principles.”

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy made his advent on the world cultural scene at a time when the West was ignorant with and the East was indifferent to the variegated facets of Indian achievements in the realm of aesthetics. He was one single scholar to whom, more than anybody else, the world should owe its understanding of Indian art. He saw all cultures as dialects of the same language.

Coomaraswamy was born on August 22, 1877, to a distinguished family of Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. His father Sir Muthu Coomaraswamy (1834-79) was a barrister and scholar. He was called to the English Bar on 26th January, 1863, which was remarkable ‘by reason of this being the first person admitted a barrister of our Inns of Court who was neither Christian nor Jew’, and was knighted on 11th August, 1874. In 1876, he married Elizabeth Clay Beeby, the elder daughter of William John Beeby of Hertfordshire.

Ananda lost his father before he was two, and he was brought up in England by his mother who lived long and died in 1942. Young Ananda studied in Gloucestershire and then in London. He lived in England for about 25 years, took a Science Degree from London with distinction, secured his D.Sc. and also became an expert linguist with good command over a number of languages like English, German, Sanskrit, Sinhalese, Pali, Hindi, Tamil, Persian, Spanish and French. He was appointed Director of The Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon when he was only 25. He travelled extensively all over the West, Asia, and the Far East.

Though he was a highly qualified Doctor of Science and a distinguished mineralogist, Coomaraswamy gave

up his lucrative job in order to devote himself whole heartedly to the serious study of Indian culture, the arts, religion and philosophy. He noted that the European influence on Indian art was almost destructive. What pained him deeply was the rather tawdry and perhaps erroneous way in which some self styled Western ‘orientalists’ treated the art treasures of the East, and presented lop-sided and distorted views of them. Coomaraswamy devoted his life to promoting a proper understanding and appreciation of Indian art.

*‘Ananda Coomaraswamy is one of those great Hindus,’ wrote Romain Rolland in the foreword to one of Coomaraswamy’s books, ‘who nourished, like Tagore on the cultures of Europe and Asia, and justifiably proud of their splendid civilization, have conceived the task of working for the union of Eastern and Western thought for the good of humanity’.*

India and Sri Lanka were idealised in his mind. Later on India became his spiritual home. For thirty years from 1917 until 1947 (the year of his death), he worked at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and built up its unique Indian Art Gallery. He collected and interpreted the art objects in his own inimitable style, creating thereby a rare awareness towards Indian art in the western world. In fact, he spent the best years of his life in uniting the East and the West through culture and philosophy. Coomaraswamy visualized the chosen people of the future as ‘an aristocracy of the whole world in which the vigour of European action will be united to the serenity of Asiatic thought.’

Coomaraswamy’s writings embody the tension of an oriental

intuition with the scientific discipline of the West. ‘Ananda Coomaraswamy is one of those great Hindus,’ wrote Romain Rolland in the foreword to one of Coomaraswamy’s books, ‘who nourished, like Tagore on the cultures of Europe and Asia, and justifiably proud of their splendid civilization, have conceived the task of working for the union of Eastern and Western thought for the good of humanity’.

In his article on *Indian Contribution to Human Welfare* (published in 1915 in the *Athenaeum*, London and subsequently in the *Dance of Siva*), Coomaraswamy wrote, ‘India’s essential contribution to world civilization is simply her Indian-ness. The heart and essence of the Indian experience is to be found in a constant institution of the unity of all life. ....it grasped more firmly than others the fundamental meaning and purpose of life’. India was compared to ‘the prow of the heavy ship, laden with a thousand wisdoms’.

In 1926, Coomaraswamy published his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, a unique book on the arts of South-East Asia. After coming in contact with Sister Nivedita, he wrote his essays on Indian nationalism.

‘In his *Early Indian Architecture*’, writes Meister, ‘Coomaraswamy provided a foundation for the discussion of Indian urbanism and its architectural language that no work since has supplanted; he also laid a groundwork — never fully explicit, for understanding the means by which the morphology of later Indian temples has been rooted in both the symbolic and the formal language of early Indian architecture.’

‘Science and idealism combined in his methodology, leading him eventually from close studies of strata of textual, visual, and experiential evidence to a metaphysics rich in alternative formulations’ wrote Roger Lipsey in *Coomaraswamy, His Life and work*.

Coomaraswamy used to contribute articles regularly to *Shilpi* on topics such as *Religious ideas in Craftsmanship* (Nov. 1946), *The Village-craftsman in India and Ceylon* (August, 1946), *The Feudal Craftsman* (1947) and so on. His last article, *The Indian Temple* specially written for the October 1947 issue of *Shilpi* was destined to be a posthumous publication as this great savant of India's art and her culture passed away in Boston on September 10, 1947. His long-cherished desire to settle down in India 'somewhere below the Himalayas,' never was fulfilled.

Constantly devoted for thirty years to the study and writing India's culture, Coomaraswamy turned out no less than 40 books and more than 500 articles. Many of his writings have been published in German and French.

It is a curious fact that despite his great admiration for Indian women, and his idealization of India and Ceylon, not one of his four wives

was from either of these two countries. His first wife, Ethel was a German. She translated Lankan classics. He renamed his second wife Alice (an Englishwoman) Ratandevi after marriage, and inspired her to learn Indian classical music. His third wife Stella (an American) learnt Indonesian dancing. However his fourth and last wife Donna Lousia (or Zinda, an Argentinian) was the only one who became well known as 'Mrs. Coomaraswamy'. She was a photographer in her own right, and it was perhaps Coomaraswamy's interest in photography that must have brought them together. After his death, all his photographs, sketches, manuscripts, records, and other memorabilia, as well as letters written by him to his friends and admirers in many countries were all in her collection. She died in 1968.

In conclusion, I quote Eric Gill, a noted art critic, who in his tribute to Coomaraswamy wrote 'No other living writer has written the truth in

matters of art, life, religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding. I know no one else in whom so many rare gifts and qualities and powers have been combined.' ❧

**P**rabhakar V. Begde is a rare combination of practicing architect, writer, architectural historian, columnist and indologist. He is the author of *Ancient and Medieval Town Planning in India* (1978) *Forts and Palaces of India* (1982) and *Living Sculpture* (1996). A self-taught scholar, he has been greatly influenced by the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy, E.B. Havell and Stella Kramrisch. He looks at Indian sculpture as an architect and his approach is refreshingly different and original, highlighting the intricacies of iconography and classical poetry. He is also visiting faculty at the TVB School of Habitat Studies, New Delhi.



IGNCA

The challenge of the East is very precise: To what end is your life? Without an answer to this question there may indeed be change, but progress is impossible; for without a sense of direction, who knows if we do not return upon our footsteps in everlasting circles?



# CHEMBAI VAIDYANATHA BHAGAVATAR

UNNI RAMACHANDRAN

*THE EYE pays homage to 'Chembai', the legendary South Indian musician on his 100th birth anniversary.*

*Salilam Varshaya Varshaya  
Salilam Varshaya Varshaya*

The rich, melodious and full throated sound of a young man filled the air. It was the *Raga Amritavarshini* (The Rain of Nectar) sung in all its glory.

The year was 1928 and the young singer was Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar. The spontaneously swelling crowds gathered on the dried up banks of the River Bharatapuzha looked expectantly at the sky. Only a miracle could relieve the drought that had hit Palghat in Kerala for the second consecutive year. However, for the moment they were glued to the young musician who sang with a rare devotional fervour.

The crowd was moved with the music and many an eye welled with tears. Almost in sympathy, Nature wept too....a heavy shower of rain soaked the parched earth. It rained and rained while the crowd stood there in utter disbelief!

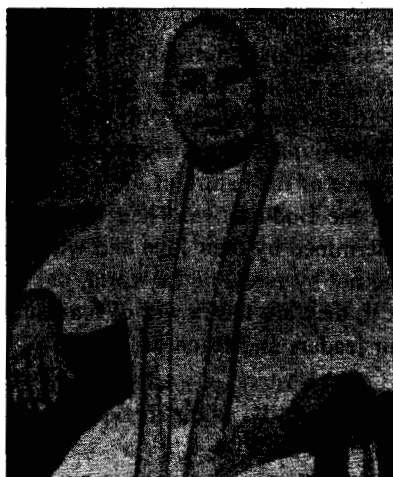
We do not know if this incident really took place or whether it was a legend. But then, 'Chembai', as he came to be known, was a living legend even at that young age.

When a boy was born to them in 1896, little did Anantha Bhagavatar and Parvati Ammal realise that he would turn out to be a musical prodigy. Young Vaidyanathan belonged to a lineage of musical greats. He and his brother Subramanyam learnt music from

his father who was the son of the vocalist Brahmashri Ganachakradana Subbiah.

The young brothers made their debut in 1904 followed by a concert at the Vaikom temple in 1907. Later, both the boys underwent rigorous training with the famous Kaliagudi Natesa Sastrigal and finally returned to Chembai as adepts.

Madras 1918 was a landmark



SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI

year for the young Bhagavatar. For he gave its citizens a concert they could never forget easily. Soon he established a music school in Madras with no fees for its students.

Chembai embarked on his musical career, travelling the length and breadth of India. His voice was high pitched yet vibrant and rarely tired itself out. He was known for being able to sing for hours on end with or without accompanists. He was a master of *laya* or tempo.

Chembai the man was as full of graceful qualities as was his music.

Humility and faith were the hallmarks of his personality. According to Tyagaraja, the legendary saint-composer in the Carnatic tradition, music and *bhakti* (devotion) go together. Music without *bhakti* is like a temple without a deity. Chembai's belief in this was unshakeable and he infused it into every note he sang.

There is yet another legend associated with Chembai. In August 1952, as he sang at a concert at Suchindram, his most precious asset, his voice, failed. Something dire had happened to his vocal chords and not a note came forth. For two years he tried every possible medical treatment but nothing happened. His throat remained silent. He prayed to the Krishna of Guruvayoor in whom he had unflinching faith. Story has it that while he prayed, a Malayali Brahmin called Vaidyanatha Namboodiri overheard him. He invited Chembai to his house and gave him something made of *ghee* (clarified butter) to eat. Lo and behold! His voice came back to him in three days!

Chembai was known to encourage young aspiring artistes. Several *mridangam* and violin players owe their popularity and success to him, not to mention several vocalists.

Honours have not been tardy in their coming nor small in number. In 1931 the Madras Music Academy, the bastion of Carnatic music, honoured him with the title *Sangeeta Kalanidhi*. In 1958 he got the National Award and in 1973 he received the Padma Bhushan from the Government of India.

Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar will always be one of the brightest and noblest stars in the firmament of Carnatic music. He will be ever remembered. ❧

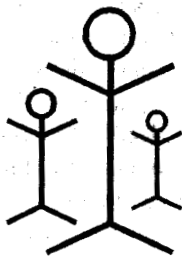
Unni Ramachandran is doing his B.A. Honours in Literature at the Nehru College of Arts and Commerce in New Delhi.

# EXTRACTS

## FROM THE DANCE OF SHIVA

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

### ON THREE TYPES OF PEOPLE



According to their position on the great curve, that is to say, according to their spiritual age, we can recognize three prominent types of men. There is first the mob of those who are preoccupied with the thought of I and Mine, whose objective is self-assertion, but are restrained on the one hand by fear of retaliation and of legal or after-death punishment, and on the other by the beginnings of love of family and love of country. These, in the main, are the 'Devourers' of Blake, the 'Slaves' of Nietzsche. Next there is a smaller, but still larger number of thoughtful and good men whose behaviour is largely determined by a sense of duty, but whose inner life is still the field of conflict between the old Adam and the new man. Men of this type are actuated on the one hand by the love of power and fame and ambition more or less noble, and on the other by the disinterested love of mankind. But this type is rarely pan-human, and its outlook is often simultaneously unselfish and narrow. In times of great stress, the men of this type reveal their true nature, showing to what extent

they have advanced more or less than has appeared. But all these, who have but begun to taste of freedom, must still be guided by rules. Finally, there is the much smaller number of great men — heroes, saviours, saints and *avatars* — who have definitely passed the period of greatest stress and have attained peace, or at least have attained to occasional and unmistakable vision of life as a whole. These are the 'Prolific' of Blake, the 'Masters' of Nietzsche, true Brahmins in their own right, and partake of the nature of the Superman and the Bodhisattva. Their activity is determined by their love and wisdom, and not by rules. In the world, but not of it, they are the flower of humanity, our leaders and teachers.



### ON AN IDEALISTIC EUROPE AND A MATERIALIZED ASIA



The decay of Asia proceeds, partly of internal necessity, because at the present moment the social change from co-operation to competition is spoken of as progress, and because it seems to promise the ultimate recovery of political power, and partly as the

result of destructive exploitation by industrialists. Even those European thinkers who may be called the prophets of the 'new age' are content to think of a development taking place in Europe alone. But let it be clearly realized that the modern world is not the ancient world of slow communications; what is done in India or Japan to-day has immediate spiritual and economic results in Europe and America. To say that east is east and west is west is simply to hide one's head in the sand. It will be quite impossible to establish any higher social order in the West so long as the East remains infatuated with the, to her, entirely novel and fascinating theory of *laissez-faire*.

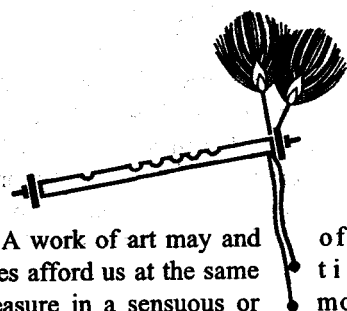
The rapid degradation of Asia is thus an evil portent for the future of humanity and for the future of the Western social idealism of which the beginnings are already recognizable. If, either in ignorance or in contempt of Asia, constructive European thought omits to seek the cooperation of Eastern philosophers, there will come a time when Europe will not be able to fight industrialism, because this enemy will be entrenched in Asia. It is not sufficient for the English colonies and America to protect themselves by immigration laws against cheap Asiatic labour; that is a merely temporary device, and likely to do more harm than good, even apart from its injustice. Nor will it be possible for the European nationalist ideal that every nation should choose its own form of government, and lead its own life, to be

realized, so long as the European nations have, or desire to have, possessions in Asia. What has to be secured is the conscious co-operation of East and West for common ends, not the subjection of either to the other, nor their lasting estrangement. For if Asia be not with Europe, she will be *against* her, and there may arise a terrible conflict – economic, or even armed, between an idealistic Europe and a materialized Asia.

(From *What has India Contributed to World Welfare?*).



## ON THE APPRECIATION OF AESTHETICS



A work of art may and often does afford us at the same time pleasure in a sensuous or moral way, but this sort of pleasure is derived directly from its material qualities, such as tone or texture, assonance etc. or the ethical peculiarity of its theme, and not from its aesthetic qualities. The aesthetic experience is independent of this, and may even, as Dhananjaya says, be derived in spite of sensuous or moral displeasure.

Incidentally we may observe that the fear of art which prevails amongst Puritans arises partly from the failure to recognize that aesthetic experience does not depend on pleasure or pain at all : and when this is not the immediate difficulty, then from the distrust of any experience which is 'beyond good and evil' and so devoid of a definitely moral purpose.

The tasting of *rasa* – the vision of beauty – is enjoyed, says Vishvanatha, 'only by those who are competent thereto' : and he quotes Dharmadatta to the effect that 'those devoid of imagination, in the theatre, are but as

the wood-work, the walls and the stones.' It is a matter of common experience that it is possible for a man to devote a whole life time to the study of art, without having once experienced aesthetic emotion : 'historical research' as Croce expresses it, 'directed to illumine a work of art by placing us in a position to judge it, does not alone suffice to bring it to birth in our spirit,' for 'pictures, poetry and every work of art produce no effect save on souls prepared to receive them.' Vishvanatha comments very pertinently on this fact when he says that 'even some of the most eager students of poetry are seen not to have a right perception of *rasa*.' The capacity and genius necessary for appreciation are partly native ('ancient') and partly cultivated ('contemporary') but cultivation alone is useless, and if the poet is born, so too is the *rasika*, and criticism is akin to genius.

Indian theory is very clear that instruction is not the purpose of art. On this point Dhananjaya is sufficiently sarcastic :

'As for any simple man of little intelligence,' he writes, 'who says that from dramas, which distill joy, the gain is knowledge only, as in the case of history and the like (mere statement, narrative or illustration) – homage to him, for he has averted his face from what is delightful.'

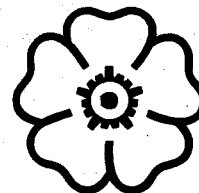
The spectator's appreciation of beauty depends on the effort of his own imagination, 'just as in the case of children playing with clay elephants'. Thus, technical elaboration (realism) in art is not by itself the cause of *rasa*. As remarked by Rabindranath Tagore 'in our country, those of the audience who are appreciative, are content to perfect the song in their own mind by the force of their own feeling.' This is not very different from what is said by Shukracharya with reference to images: 'the defects of images are constantly destroyed by the power of the virtue of the worshipper who has his heart always set on God.' If this attitude seems to us dangerously uncritical, that is to say dangerous to art, or rather to accomplishment, let us remember that it prevailed everywhere in all

periods of great creative activity and that the decline of art has always followed the decline of love and faith.

(From *Hindu View of Art – Theory of Beauty*).



## ON BEAUTY



*For beauty they have sought  
in every age  
He who practices it is from  
himself set free*

Goethe

What, then, is Beauty, what is *rasa*, what is it that entitles us to speak of diverse works as beautiful or *rasavant*? What is this sole quality which the most dissimilar works of art possess in common? Let us recall the history of a work of art. There is (1) an aesthetic intuition on the part of the original artist – the poet or creator then (2) the internal expression of this intuition – the true creation or vision of beauty, (3) the indication of this by external signs (language) for the purpose of communication – the technical activity and finally, (4) the resulting stimulation of the critic or *rasika* to reproduction of the original intuition, or of some approximation to it.

The source of the original intuition may, as we have seen, be any aspect of life whatsoever. To one creator the scales of a fish suggest a rhythmical design, another is moved by certain landscapes, a third elects to speak of hovels, a fourth to sing of palaces, a fifth may express the idea that all things are enlinked, enlaced and enamoured in terms of the General Dance, or he may express the same idea equally vividly by saying that 'not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father's knowledge.' Every artist discovers beauty, and every critic finds



it again when he tastes of the same experience through the medium of the external signs. But where is this beauty? We have seen that it cannot be said to exist in certain things and not in others. It may then be claimed that beauty exists everywhere; and this I do not deny, though I prefer the clearer statement that it may be discovered anywhere. If it could be said to exist everywhere in a material and intrinsic sense, we could pursue it with our cameras and scales, after the fashion of the experimental psychologists; but if we did so we should only achieve a certain acquaintance with average taste – we should not discover a means of distinguishing forms that are beautiful from forms that are ugly. Beauty can never thus be measured, for it does not exist apart from the artist himself, and the *rasika* who enters into his experience.

*All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it.*

*Did you think it was in the white or grey stone? or the lines of the arches and cornices?*

*All music is what awakes in you when you are reminded of it by the instruments.*

*It is not the violins and the cornets....nor the score of the baritone singer*

*It is nearer and further than they.*

**Walt Whitman**

When every sympathetic consideration has been excluded, however, there still remains a pragmatic value in the classification of works of art as beautiful or ugly. But what precisely do we mean by these designations as applied to objects? In the works called beautiful we recognize a correspondence of theme and expression, content and form, while in those called ugly we find the content and form at variance. In time and space, however, the correspondence never amounts to an identity: it is our own activity, in the presence of the work of art, which completes the ideal relation, and it is in this sense that beauty is what we 'do to' a work of art rather than a quality present in the object. With reference to the object, then 'more' or 'less' beautiful will

imply a greater or lesser correspondence between content and form and this is all that we can say of the object as such. Or in other words, art is good that is good of its kind. In the stricter sense of completed internal aesthetic activity, however, beauty is absolute and cannot have degrees.

The vision of beauty is spontaneous, in just the same sense as the inward light of the lover (*bhakta*). It is a state of grace that cannot be achieved by deliberate effort; though perhaps we can remove hindrances to its manifestation, for there are many witnesses that the secret of all art is to be found in self-forgetfulness. And we know that this state of grace is not achieved in the pursuit of pleasure; the hedonists have their reward, but they are in bondage to loveliness, while the artist is free in beauty.

(From *That Beauty is a State*).



## ON WOMEN



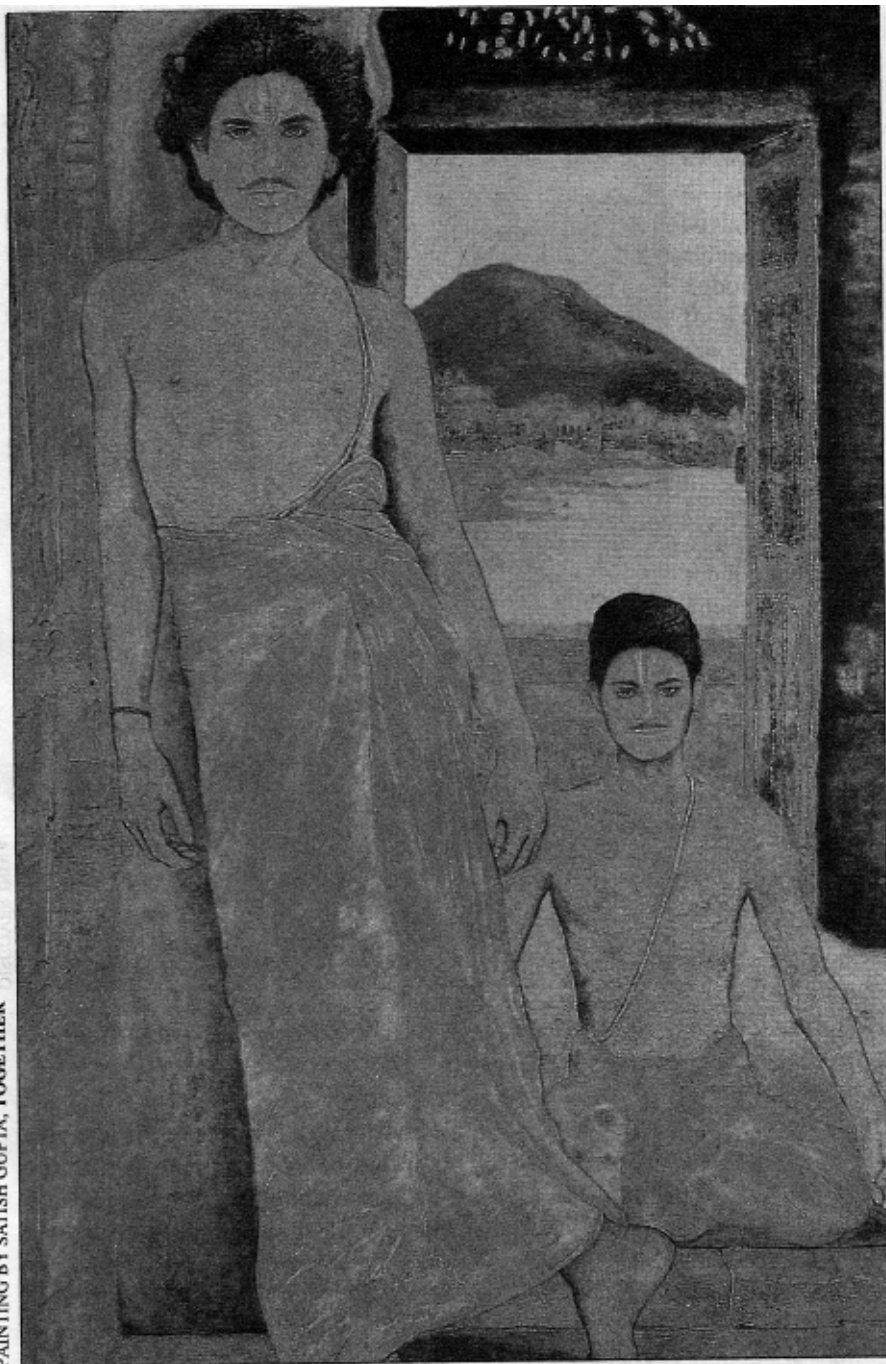
In families where the men have received an English education unrelated to Indian life and thought, the inheritance of Indian modes of thought and feeling rests in the main with women; for a definite philosophy of life is bound up with household ritual and traditional etiquette and finds expression equally in folk-tale and cradle-song and popular poetry, and in those *pauranic* and epic stories which constitute the household Bible literature of India. Under these conditions it is often the case that Indian women, with all their faults of sentimentality and ignorance, have remained the guardians of a spiritual culture which is of greater worth than the efficiency and information of the educated.

It is according to the Tantrik scriptures, devoted to the cult of the

Mother of the World, that women, who partake of her nature more essentially than other living beings, are especially honoured; here the woman may be a spiritual teacher (*guru*), and the initiation of a son by a mother is more fruitful than any other. One doubts how far this may be of universal application, believing with Paracelsus that woman is nearer to the world than man, of which the evidence appears in her always more personal point of view. But all things are possible to women such as Madalasa.

The claim of the Buddhist nun – 'How should be woman's nature hinder us?' – has never been systematically denied in India. It would have been contrary to the spirit of Indian culture to deny to individual women the opportunity of saintship or learning in the sense of closing to them the schools of divinity or science after the fashion of the Western academies in the nineteenth century. But where the social norm is found in marriage and parent-hood for men and women alike, it could only have been in exceptional cases and under exceptional circumstances that the latter specialised, whether in divinity, like Auvvai, Mira Bai, or the Buddhist nuns, in science, like Lilavati, or in war, like Chand Bibi or the Rani of Jhansi. Those set free to cultivate expert knowledge of science or to follow with undivided allegiance either religion or any art, could only be the *sannyasini* or devotee, the widow, and the courtesan. A majority of women have always, and naturally, preferred marriage and motherhood to either of these conditions. But those who felt the call of religion, those from whom a husband's death removed the central motif of their life, and those trained from childhood as expert artists, have always maintained a great tradition in various branches of cultural activity such as social service or music. What we have to observe is that Hindu sociologists have always regarded these specializations as more or less incompatible with wifehood and motherhood; life is not long enough for the achievement of many different things.

(From *Status of Indian Woman*). ❧



## WHO ARE WE IN BHARATAVARSHA TODAY?

### QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR OWN IDENTITY AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING

*The following article is an address to about three hundred and fifty young people gathered at the annual SPIC MACAY Convention in Madras in June 1996.*

PAULOS MAR GREGORIOS

Dear Friends,

I am especially glad to be with you. For a man of my age (seventy four), few other things are as inspiring as being among a group of intelligent young people. Especially if they are a set of vibrant, choice, cultured, creative young people such as I know you to be. Thank you for this opportunity.

I wish today to reflect with you on the question of our identity and self-understanding as so-called Indians. That self-perception always plays a decisive role in our life choices.

I have preferred to use the term *Bharatavarsha*, rather than India for some obvious reasons. First, the names India, Indian, Hindu, Hindustan etc., are of not our own choosing. These are names which outsiders have used to refer to us; only recently have we appropriated them for ourselves.

These names originated in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin and in West Asia – the Hebrew name 'Hindo' or 'Hiddo' we observe in the *Book of Esther* of the Jewish Bible, as the name of one of the 127 provinces or *satrapies* of the Persian Empire (*mi-Hiddo ad Kush* – from India to Ethiopia) in the time of Artaxerxes. That did not include most of present day India. The Greeks preferred to speak of 'Indos' and used the adjective 'Indikes'. All of it, we know are cognates of 'Sindhu' the wide ocean or large river and its banks, which conquerors and immigrants coming from the Northwest by land first encountered when coming to our land. That was North West India, certainly not what we mean by 'India' today.

Our words are 'Jambudvipa' and 'Bharatavarsha'. The word *dvipa* did not then mean island, but only 'inhabited territory'. The Tibetans still refer to our land as Jambudvipa. Bharatavarsha, owes its name to the legendary King Bharata. As the *Vishnupurana* (2:3:1) put it:

*Uttaram yat samudrasya –  
Himadreischaiva dakshinam  
Varsham tad Bharatam nama –  
Bharati yatra santati*

We need to keep in mind that most

Brahmanical accounts, including the *Puranas*, originating in the North, show but scant awareness of what lies south of the thousand-peaked Vindhyas, the *dakshin-avarta*, or Dakshinapatha, including Andhra, Vidarbha, Chola, Chera and Pandyan kingdoms, the last three collectively called Tamizhaka, or Damiraka in western accounts.

When we speak today of Bharatavarsha, we are making a concession to our northern brothers and sisters who often thought of Bharatavarsha as identical with the Indo-Gangetic Aryavarta or the Land of the Noble. Part of our identity today is in recreating awareness of the fact that the fundamentals of Indian religion and culture were formed and fostered more in the South than in the Indo-Gangetic plains.

So, for us, it is Bharatavarsha, not just Aryavarta, but also Dakshinavarta, equally important and decisive for our identity today. Dakshinavarta, which was later westernized as the Deccan, was the fertile breeding ground of much that moves us today as Indians. Parallel to the northern *Vedas* are the south Indian *Vedas* like *Thiruvaymoli* which found expression in the Alvars, the Nayanars, and other Saivite, Vaishnavite spiritual giants of the South.

Few people are aware that the concept 'Hinduism' was a 19th century creation of Western scholarship, in an attempt to club together under one heading, the various *sampradayas* (traditions) practiced in Bharatavarsha. Neither 'Hinduism' nor 'even 'Sanatana Dharma' was used by our tradition before the 19th century as a collective name for all the native-born religious practices of India other than Buddha Dharma and Jaina Dharma.

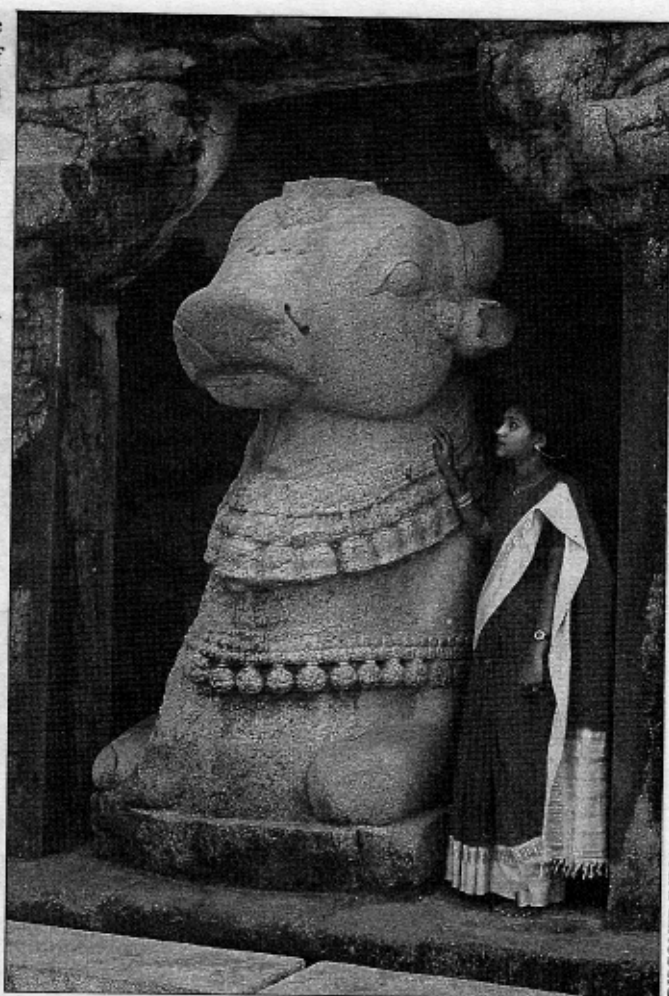
Let me speak to you of two Southern documents which show us that Shaivism in medieval times was not regarded as part of 'Hinduism'. The two documents, not so widely known are (a) the eleventh century document *Soma Sambhu Paddhati* also known as *Karmakanda-Kramavali*; and (b) *Acharyahridayam* (13th/14th century) by Alakiya Manavala Perumal Nayanar, brother of the well known Pillai

Lokacharya of the Tenkalai School of the Srivaishnava tradition.

*Soma Sambhu Paddhati* is a manual of Saivite rituals applicable to all orthodox *sampradayas* of Saivism, and was actually practiced for centuries. It was first published at Devakkottai in 1931, by K M Subrahmanya Sastri, with notes based on the commentary of Aghora Sivacharya. Its main content is sets of rituals for accepting the non-Saivite into the Saivite community and believed in its superiority to all other religions and *sampradayas*, including the various *sampradayas* of Hinduism as we regard them today. Every other *sampradaya* creates a particular mark on its practitioner, a mark which the manual calls *linga*, which not only does not take you to *moksha* (liberation) but acts as an

**Part of our identity today is in recreating awareness of the fact that the fundamentals of Indian religion and culture were formed and fostered more in the South than in the Indo-Gangetic plains.**

obstacle. This *linga* of other *sampradayas* has to be lifted from its practitioner (the ritual for this is called *Lingoddhara*) so that he or she can take the true path of Saivite practice and attain salvation. All the Saivite *agamas* and *upagamas* lead to this initiation or *diksha* into the true



*Soma Sambhu Paddhati* does not regard Saivism as a part of the Hindu religion as we regard it today, but on the contrary, condemns all other *sampradayas* of what we now know as Hinduism as inferior.

Saivite path of perfection. It is a very sophisticated doctrine, but the important thing for us is to recognize that this 11th century Saivite manual does not regard Saivism as a part of the Hindu religion as we regard it today, but on the contrary, condemns all other *sampradayas* of what we now know as Hinduism as inferior. It even rejects the cardinal doctrine of *karma* as belonging to the world of *maya* and therefore having no reality. Clearly, at least in the eleventh century, there is no such thing as Hinduism, and Saivism does not regard itself as Hindu.

The other document I mentioned was *Acharyahridayam* written in Manipravalam Tamil (i.e. a mixture of Sanskrit and Tamil), in the thirteenth century. The author is Manavala Mamuni, the brother of the well known Pillai Lokacharya of the Tenkalai School. Alakiya Manavala Perumal



Nayanar, as his full name is, was also known as Vadikesari.

*Acharyahrdayam* is an open universalistic religious programme which seeks to radically restructure the traditional Srivaishnava movement and purge it of all northern or Vedic elements. The frontal attack is on the doctrine of *karma* which has come down from the North and is totally rejected as superfluous, along with all Vedic rituals, throwing out the doctrine of *varnasramadharma* as well as the exalted place of Brahma himself.

The central role of *karma* is then given to the doctrine of *kainkarya*, which is an aspect of the nature of human beings – the inner vocation of every man and woman, to whatever religion he/she belongs and realise *moksha* by sheer *bhakti*. This, according to Manavala Mamuni is true religion and it has nothing to do with the so-called Hindu doctrines and rituals. This is what we see in Nammalvar's *Tiruvaymoli* which is a southern *Veda*, just as authoritative in the South as *Rg Sama, Yajur* or *Atharva*. Even Sri Ramanuja's *Brahmasutrabhashya* was composed on the basis of the *Tiruvaymoli* which is a real *shastra* superior to the northern *shastras*.

I have briefly cited these two medieval texts to advance the thesis that both Saivism and Vaishnavism, as they later came to be called, are not originally part of so-called 'Hinduism'.



The *sramana* tradition in India is primordial, older than the *Vedas* and Brahminism, at least as old as the *Samkhya* and *Yoga* in the North.

They were independent southern religions or spiritualities more than 2000 years old, which the North assimilated into its pantheon, and the so-called *Vedas* themselves were radically affected by this southern spirituality of Saivism and Srivaishnavism.

I shall once again make my point. Our consciousness of our own religious past is almost incorrigibly distorted. Since the 19th century we have created a false image of an amalgam called Hinduism, which never existed before the 19th century. In redrawing the map of Indian spirituality, we will have to look for the basics in south Indian spiritual movements which later spread northwards, got Sanskritised and

**Perhaps the *Vedas* themselves were created by the *sramanas*.**

adopted into the vedic-Brahmanic pantheon of the North.

I will make one more attempt to elaborate this point. It is quite customary, even for the constitution of India, to regard Buddhism and Jainism (as well as Sikhism) as aspects or versions of Hinduism. The fact of the matter is that India has a wide-ranging spiritual-religious-cultural tradition quite prior to the rise of Brahminism and the *Vedas*. Vedic Brahminism was a minority religion or culture which the Brahmins were trying to impose on all the people of India. There was strong resistance on the part of the people to this imposition, and Buddhism and Jainism are the strong and widespread protest against the imposition of Vedic Brahminism by influential people. These two protest religions were reinforced and enriched by the pre-Brahminic tradition of *sramanas* (*bhiksus* or wandering monks). Buddha



Few historians devote sufficient space to India's contacts with North Africa and West Asia through maritime trade.

himself was referred to by others on the occasion of his *samadhi* as 'The Great *Sramana*'.

The *sramana* tradition in India is primordial, older than the *Vedas* and Brahminism, at least as old as the *Samkhya* and *Yoga* in the North. In fact, some of the earlier *rishis* were not Brahminists or Vedic Hindus. Perhaps the *Vedas* themselves were created by the *sramanas*. What we call the *Arsha* (*Arshabharata*) tradition was in fact a creation of pre-Vedic *sramanas*. And there is sufficient ground to believe that the *sramanas*, a wandering people, were by no means confined to North India. More likely the *sramana* movement itself, which later became the matrix of the large scale conversions to the Buddha *dharma* and the Jain monastic-spiritual movements was of South Indian origin, based in the same milieu which created the *bhakti* traditions of what later came to be called *Saiva* and *Vaishnava sampradayas*. No understanding of the roots of Indian identity is possible without some understanding of the *sramana* tradition.

Another distortion of Indian history is the impression some historians give that most of India's contacts with the outside were through the North-West frontier. Few historians devote sufficient space to India's contacts with North Africa and West Asia through maritime trade. And definitely South India played a larger role than North India in

seafaring and in trade contacts with Egypt and Syria, with Palestine and Babylonia, as well as Persia, long before the Persian or Achaemenian imperialism extended their empire into India in the days of Cyrus (558-530 BCE) and Darius (522-486 BCE). King Solomon of Palestine and his ally King Hiram of Syria sent Phoenician sailors to trade with India and their contacts were mostly with the South. The fact that a Jewish community had migrated to Bombay and Kerala as early as the first century should not be forgotten in writing Indian history. The flourishing spice trade was an avenue for many contacts between the southern Indian peoples and their trade partners in the Middle East. It is no exaggeration to say that South India was receiving massive Mediterranean influence in the millennium before the Christian era, as well as in the early part of the millennium after that. South India became more cosmopolitan than the North as a result of these contacts which continued into the Muslim period.

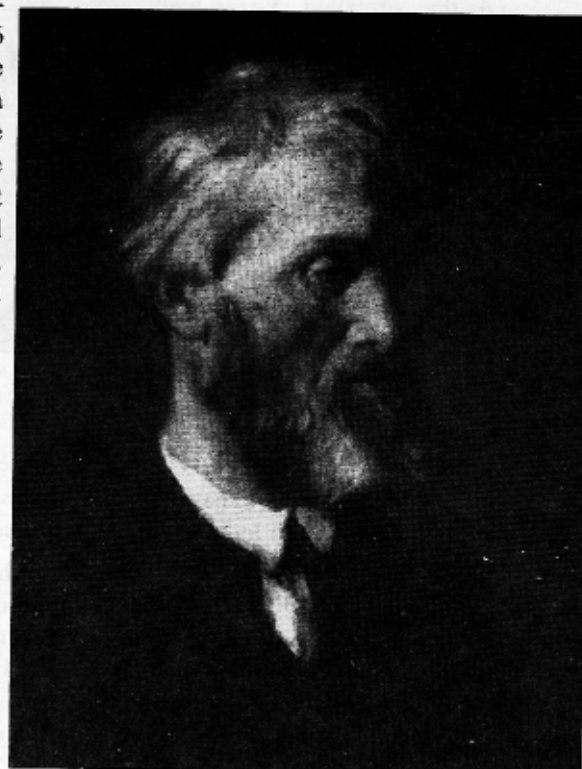
## II THE EUROPEAN ENLIGHTENMENT

There are many educated people in our country who have not even heard about the European Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries, or if they have heard about it, have but a very vague idea of what it was and how it affects questions about Indian identity today. And yet all those of us who have had a modicum of western education have already come under its influence.

In the words of Owen Barfield (*Romanticism Comes Of Age*, Wesleyan Univ. Press, Middletown, Conn 1966), the European Enlightenment was 'a state of mind which descended on intellectual Europe, in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries' and which, according to Carlyle, was one of the deeper causes of the French Revolution. But it was more than just a state of mind. Nor was it confined to the intellectuals alone. It was more of a spiritual fever, with serious social,

economic and political consequences, that spread like an epidemic in 17th century Europe. The causes were many. Europe, even in the beginning of the 17th century, languishing in poverty

gave to European productivity, we can understand both the collapse of the feudal system and the rise of the new class of bourgeoisie seeking to unseat the feudal lords from the thrones of economic power.



Thomas Carlyle.

and squalor, suddenly found itself getting *nouveau riche*. Mercantile capitalism was flourishing and was already bringing much of the wealth of Asia, Africa and Latin America into Europe. Add to that the fruits of piracy on the open seas, and the mindless plunder of the colonies by the European imperialist powers, and the new wealth of Europe became unprecedented. This was behind the new intellectual fever that spread in Europe. When we also take into account the burgeoning Industrial Revolution and the fillip it

***The European Enlightenment was the act of the newly rich, newly healthy, newly educated humanity of Europe asserting boldly that it was coming out of its adolescence to the maturity of adulthood. In its adolescence it was dependent on the Church and the tradition to tell it what to do.***

The European Enlightenment was the direct fruit of this economic, political and social upheaval in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. Perhaps I should mention the great climatological change that came over Europe at the beginning of the 18th century. The Small Ice Age (1300-1700) which lay over Europe like a shroud suddenly receded about this time. As more money came in from the colonies, there were more jobs for people, and therefore they could marry earlier and have more children. Health conditions also improved in Europe around this time. The bubonic plague came to an end in the 18th century. Education was a major instrument of the European Enlightenment, though reserved for the bourgeoisie, and not extending to the working class. As the middle

class became progressively more educated, more healthy and also more wealthy, they became more sanguine, and able to repudiate the authority, not only of the Feudal Lords, but also of the Church and of all inherited tradition.

Let us ask that question: "What is the Enlightenment" to the most prominent founding father of the European Enlightenment - Immanuel Kant. His answer to the question: What is the Enlightenment? (published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* - December 1784) is the most revealing definition:

"The Enlightenment is the coming out of Man from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the lack of will to serve one's own understanding without direction from another. This is a self-imposed immaturity; if Reason languishes, it is not for lack of understanding, but only lack of resolve and courage to serve oneself without direction from another. *Sapere Aude!* Dare to think! Think boldly! Wake up!



Take courage, serve your own understanding. This is the motto (*wahlspruch*) of the Enlightenment”.

In other words the European Enlightenment was the act of the newly rich, newly healthy, newly educated white humanity of Europe asserting boldly that it was coming out of its adolescence to the maturity of adulthood. In its adolescence it was dependent on the Church and the tradition to tell it what to do. Now in its adulthood it needed no religion, no tradition, nothing outside of its own reason to tell it what to do. The adult humanity of Europe, especially the educated among them, should live by their own reason and understanding, and throw away the crutches of adolescent dependence.

And in India, the mindset and identity awareness of our educated people have been fundamentally altered by this process and attitude which began in Europe almost three centuries ago. In fact our quest for our ‘Bharatiya’ identity has come in direct conflict with the European man’s new-found identity of the 17th and succeeding centuries being sought to be imposed on all humanity as if that identity were universal.

My humble contention is that neither the white man’s identity nor our own identity awareness will be on a secure basis until we have disentangled the identity skeins that have got all tangled up in the last three centuries. The West has already started that process through their de-constructionism and post-modernism. We will help them along further if we sort out our own relationship to the European Enlightenment.

The western internal critique of the European Enlightenment has been going on for some time. Nietzsche was among the first to call in question the rationalism and historicism of the European Enlightenment, but he was branded a madman by the European ‘establishment’ and practically rejected

wholesale, though his influence comes to light in almost all the protest movements of the West.

The next important self-criticism of the EE came from the Frankfurt School of Social Research, especially in *The Dialectics of the Enlightenment* by Horkheimer and Adorno. They called the Enlightenment totalitarian, in that it laid out a method of gaining knowledge, and ruled out everything which did not come that way, as perfectly meaningless.



*We as Bharatiyas should become well acquainted with the adivasi heritage, the Vedic-Upanishadic, the Buddhist and the Jain, the Saivite and the Vaishnavite, the Taoist, the Arabic-Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Parsee, Sikh and other traditions.*



The Romantic Movement in the West was also a sort of protest against the enthronement of ‘Reason’ by the Enlightenment. Words like ‘creativity’ and ‘imagination’, being subjective elements were taboo to the early rationalist approach which was after the ‘objective truth’ in which we know ‘things as they are’. It was Romanticism which legitimised imagination and creativity as inescapable in the search for knowledge.

In more recent times it has been the task of deconstructionism and post-modernism to shatter the remnants of ‘Reason’s’ exclusive claims on knowledge. There has been a consistent devaluation, not only of propositional truth which modern science was seeking to capture, but also of the written language as little more than squiggles of ink on paper, far removed from the truth. Post-modernism is also a repudiation of the exclusive dependence

of the modern period on human reason. They would, with Nietzsche and Horkheimer hold that the will and imagination as well as creativity are essential aspects of coming to terms with reality. Post-modernism is thus post-enlightenment, post-Marxist, and post-scientistic.

Yet as people of Bharatavarsha in the 20th century we cannot be satisfied with the post-modernist approach as adequate to handle the intellectual-spiritual crisis in which the West finds itself. In this brief address I can only hope to indicate the main points on which we differ from the post-modernist approach to reality.

With the post-moderns we can agree that reality is in fact unrepresentable through discourse and even unconceivable in terms of human conceptuality. Even allusion and metaphor cannot present the unrepresentable. We know that ‘word’ and ‘thing’ do not always fully correlate (Michael Fou-

cault, *Les Mots et les Choses*, *The Order of Things*, Tavistock 1970). The realm of language and the realm of being remain essentially disparate. The noumenal and the phenomenal do not exactly fit each other. The signified and the signifier are not the same.

We cannot however agree that the solution is a kind of libidinal knowledge in which we give free play to subjectivity and will, and be satisfied with what we can achieve that way.

The mistake of cultural modernity was the breaking away of substantive reason from all reference to the transcendent, and trying to domesticate it within three falsely autonomous regions called, Science, Morality and Art.

Here we begin to list a few of our own principal affirmations as people of Bharatavarsha about the nature of reality.



1. We hold that language, conceptualisation and proposition are necessary tools for humans to find their way about reality, but we stoutly deny that these can capture, comprehend or present reality as it is.

2. We hold that manifest reality, open to our senses, is only one aspect of reality, is dependent on the unmanifest, and cannot be fully understood without reference to the unmanifest. This principle is diametrically opposed to the secular position that the manifest is the only aspect of reality to which we have access and that it can be understood in itself without reference to anything that transcends it. As the *Bhagavadgita* (ch 8 v.18) expresses the *Samkhya* view:

*Avyaktad vyaktaya sarva:  
prabhavantyaharagame  
Ratryagame praliyante tatraiva  
avyaktasamjnak*

*From the unmanifest all this manifest  
happen forth  
at the beginning of the  
(cosmic) Day  
When the (Cosmic) Night comes,  
to the Same  
Unmanifest they all dissolve back.*

This is an essential tradition of Bharatavarsha, that the manifest, by the very fact that it is manifest, cannot be the final truth. For all form, without which there is no manifestation, is finite and therefore temporal, passing. The manifest, the finite-temporal cannot exist, except by being contingent upon the transcendent, the unmanifest. This is the principle which the European Enlightenment has overlooked in trying to assert the finality of human reason and knowledge. Unless we reinstate this basic principle of our civilisation we cannot, in Bharatavarsha, be ourselves. Neither deconstruction nor post-modernism acknowledges this basic principle.

3. Man/Woman in his/her present state of mind cannot enthrone himself to be the sovereign of the universe. The European Enlightenment in its great hurry to overthrow the authority of the

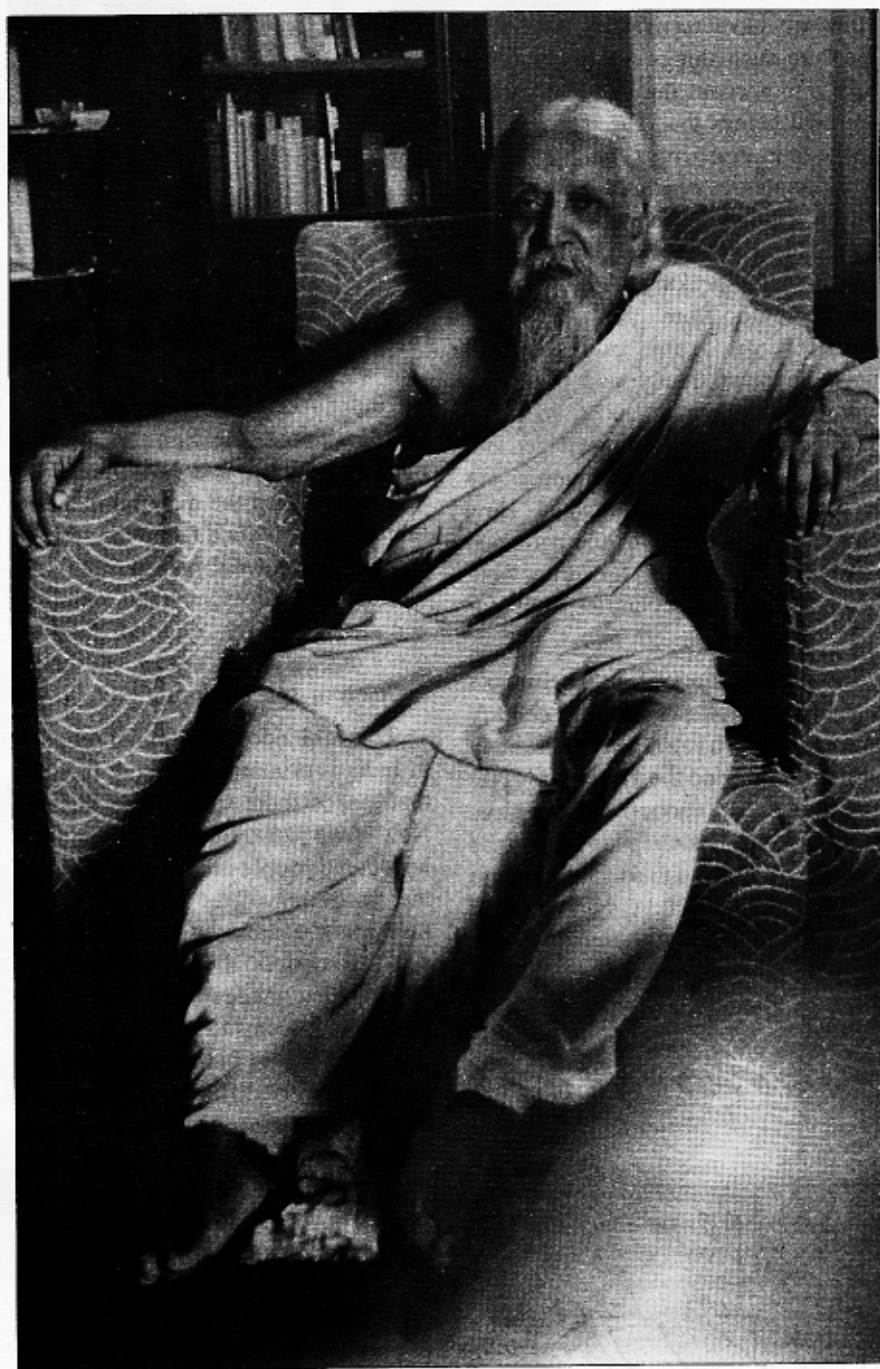
feudal nobility, threw out all authority and all tradition, enthroning the unredeemed human person with his reason as the lord of the universe, subject to no higher authority. This the Bharatiya tradition stoutly denies. This is the third point at which we Bharatiyas have to disabuse ourselves of the mark of the European Enlightenment. What the European Enlightenment has done is to make the conscious mind of ordinary man the absolute instrument of knowledge. The Bharatiya tradition on the other hand holds that there are two kinds of knowledge: ordinary sense-knowledge, and transcendent knowledge which comes only through overcoming and going beyond ordinary knowledge. It requires a discipline of *indriyanigraha*, *vaśānāsa*, *nidhidhyāsa*, all of which do not come within the purview of ordinary knowledge. The European Enlightenment refuses to recognize this category of transcendent knowledge, which requires some dependence on the authority of a *guru* or some scriptures.

I could cite many other fine points on which the Bharatiya tradition differs from the EE. I have cited three points at which our Indian intellectual culture has unwittingly fallen prey to the mistaken notions of the EE. What we need to do is not merely refuse to accept these canons and norms of the EE. We will need accordingly to revise our understanding and practice of medicine and healing first, recognising the role and function of the transcendent and unmanifest in both; also devise a new educational system in which the child has the opportunity to be exposed to the depths of the Bharatiya tradition. We will also need to fundamentally revise our media systems or systems of gathering and disseminating information, which are now based on a very superficial understanding of what constitutes knowledge. Ultimately, our political social and economic institutions themselves will have to be radically revamped. The transition will be from the production and distribution of commodities to the fundamental relations of persons and societies among themselves, on their relation to their true self as well as to

the transcendent unmanifest. To this end we as Bharatiyas should become well acquainted with our own rich and varied traditions, the *ādivasi* heritage, the *Samkhya* and *Yoga*, the *Vedic-Upanishadic*, the *Buddhist* and the *Jain*, the *Saivite* and the *Vaishnavite*, the *Bhakti* tradition, the *Taoist*, the *Arabic-Muslim*, *Jewish*, *Christian*, *Parsee*, *Sikh* and other traditions.

When we have begun to do that we may be able to persuade the dominant western system to turn back from its self-destructive quest for controlling knowledge and draw its attention to its own pre-enlightenment tradition which is replete with experiences of the transcendent. This will, of course, lead to the collapse of white imperialism and the single global market economy and related political and social systems. With both the white eye and the non-white eye open, we as humanity may begin to see new and surprising visions. ☸

*Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios  
hails from Kerala, in South India.  
He pursued a brilliant academic  
career from American Ivy League  
colleges, Oxford and Germany. He  
has received numerous prizes and  
awards in theology and for service  
to humanity from several countries.  
Honours have been heaped on  
him. Some of them are The Order  
of St. Vladimir, USSR, Soviet Land  
Nehru Award, India and the  
Oskar Pfister Award (American  
Psychiatric Association). His many  
publications include, *The Joy of  
Freedom, Science for Sane  
Societies, Cosmic Man, A Light  
too Bright, Enlightenment - East  
and West and a Human God. He  
is currently director of Niti Santi  
Kendra, a Centre for Justice and  
Peace Initiatives, New Delhi.  
Father Gregorios, though a man  
of the cloth, is a vigorous  
intellectual and his contributions  
to world philosophy is stupendous.**



AUROBINDO ASHRAM

# THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN CULTURE BY SRI AUROBINDO

– A COMMENTARY

MAKARAND PARANJAPÉ

*The Foundations of Indian Culture* is a text made up by collecting three series of essays by Sri Aurobindo which originally appeared in the quarterly *Arya* from December 1918 to January 1921. The series consisted of three themes: *Is India Civilized ?*, *A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture* and *A Defence of Indian Culture*. Another essay, *Indian Culture and External Influence*, published in the *Arya* of March 1919 was also included in the book. The book was first published in 1953 by the Sri Aurobindo Library, New York.

What follows is an edited transcript of Makarand Paranjape's talks on the book, delivered at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, New Delhi, during the Sunday *satsang*. All quotations are from the SABCL facsimile edition published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

*THE EYE* will serialise Paranjape's commentaries on the subsequent chapters of the book.



The series of articles which is today known as *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (henceforth referred to as FIC), was inspired by an attack on Indian civilization by a British drama critic, William Archer. William Archer and his attack are forgotten today, but FIC has become a classic. In fact, there had already been a response to Archer by the Indophile and Tantric scholar, Sir John Woodroffe. The title of the latter's book, *Is India Civilized*, was meant to be a provocative, if rhetorical question. Sri Aurobindo uses the same title in the first series to underscore the importance of Woodroffe's argument, whose gist he recapitulates, here in the first section.

Aurobindo begins by stating unequivocally how a culture or civilization may be evaluated: 'A true, happiness in this world is the right terrestrial aim of man, and true happiness lies in the finding and maintenance of a natural harmony of spirit, mind and body. A culture is to be valued to the extent to which it has discovered the right key of this harmony and organised its expressive motives and movements.'

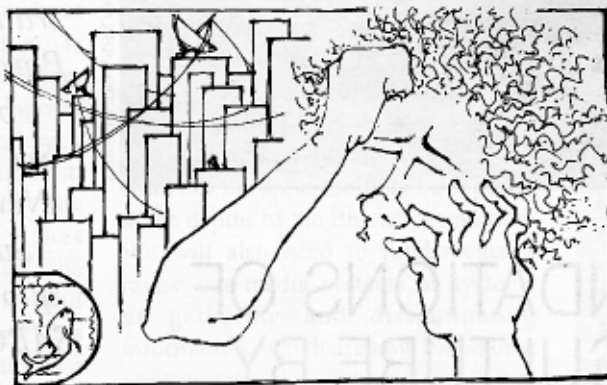
If we were to really think about this statement, we could spend hours talking about it. First of all, Aurobindo clearly avows that happiness is indeed the goal of human life. Such an admission is important because it shows how life-affirming he is. He does not regard human life as intrinsically full of *dukkha* or suffering. Next, it is important to realize that behind such a definition of what constitutes true happiness is a certain notion of what a human being is. In his scheme of things, a human being possesses at least three levels of being — the physical, the mental and the spiritual. And, what is more important, without a natural harmony between these three levels, we can never be really happy.

When Aurobindo wrote this, there were no internationally recognized yardsticks for evaluating the quality of human life as there are these days.

Now we have recognized indices to measure such things, yet these never take into account the fact that we are spiritual beings too. The result is that in the most prosperous countries of the world, countries which score the highest on the quality of human life indices, there is still a high level of discontent. I am not only speaking of the discontent which comes from class and racial conflict or from poverty and unemployment, though such things are also found in these 'advanced' societies. The fact is that the most privileged and affluent sections of these countries are also unhappy and discontented. How else can we account for the perennial fascination not only for drugs and alcohol in these countries, but for Yoga, Zen, and eastern *gurus*?

As a corollary to Aurobindo's statement, it follows that any country or society which caters only to the body or to the body and the mind, but leaves out the spirit cannot achieve true happiness. A culture, a society, a country should also make provisions to

*In the most prosperous countries of the world, countries which score the highest on the quality of human life indices, there is still a high level of discontent.*



nourish the spirit of a human being otherwise neither the society nor the individual can ever attain perfection. Such a society may attain very high levels of material prosperity, but it cannot attain or be conducive to true happiness. Our very nature is such that we cannot be truly happy until we have

the opportunity to strive for perfection. So, we see that behind Aurobindo's whole outlook is a basic premise about the nature of the human being itself. If you deny that a human being is essentially a spiritual creature, then you can also deny the rest of Aurobindo's argument.

Next, he tries to sum up the distinctive features of Indian civilisation. He says:

'India's central conception is that of the Eternal, the Spirit incased in matter, involved and immanent in it and evolving on the material plane by rebirth of the individual up the scale of being till in mental man it enters the world of ideas and the realm of conscious morality, *dharma*. *Dharma* is nothing but a system that leads us on the path of spiritual progress.'

To Aurobindo the notion of progress in India is primarily spiritual. It is this that makes India special and distinct. Now if we pause for a minute and ask how come people in India decided that the realization of the Spirit or of the Self was the most important thing to do, that that is the purpose of our birth? What made the Indians think this way? It seems to me that long ago, the best minds in India discovered that it was not very difficult to sustain life in this sub-continent. It was not very difficult to take care of all of one's

bodily needs and necessities. They lived on fruits and roots; they bathed in the flowing streams; they lived in harmony with nature. Similarly it was not very difficult to make a hut, a cottage, a hermitage. Nature provided enough. So they retired into the forest, devoted themselves to contemplating the truth. Most of the time and energy could be devoted to self-realization, to *sadhana*. The *rishis* and *munis* held the remote

control of our civilization in their hands, letting the kings and courtiers handle the mundane, material aspects of life. While other cultures thought that it was more important to build cities, to subdue enemies, to increase one's comfort and power, Indians believed that all these activities were





The fascination with Yoga, Zen and eastern gurus.

not as important as self-realization. Without the latter, all human achievements were partial and transitory.

Now, I believe that these ideals are still present in our culture. Everyone laments that we are becoming more and more materialistic, but we still have, as a civilisation, a different view of the goal of life. You must have read about how a couple of years ago, one of the richest diamond merchants in India, a young man, took *sanyas* in Ahmedabad. He distributed diamonds and pearls from atop a richly caparisoned elephant. Now you may or may not approve of such ostentation, but the idea was that the life he was about to embrace was superior to all the wealth and riches that he had accumulated. Renunciation was superior to accumulation. How else can you explain why Prince Siddhartha, the Buddha, left all the comforts of the palace?

Now, Aurobindo says that there are countries and cultures which are led by

a different, even opposite conception of human life.

Since some centuries Europe has become material, predatory and aggressive. Both Woodroffe and Aurobindo admit that Europe was not always thus, that in her medieval ages, she too was dominated by the religious ideal. Christianity itself was of Asiatic origin. Whatever be the origins of modern Europe, it now subscribes

to a totally different civilizational ideal. Since the 15th century, Europeans have overrun our earth, destroying entire civilizations, colonizing continents, subduing people, taking slaves, fighting wars and so on. What they did to Africa, to South America, to the native communities of North America, to India, South East Asia, to China and so on, is well recorded. And all along, Europe considered itself to be the most civilised part of the world, the carrier of enlightenment. How ironic!

However, the second part of Aurobindo's statement is still perhaps difficult to accept for most of us. He says that western civilisation has lost the harmony between the inner and the outer and thus what they have achieved

*Founded by H.P. Blavatsky, in conjunction with Henry S. Olcott and W.Q. Judge, the Theosophical Society influenced many eminent figures including Mahatma Gandhi, the inventor Thomas Edison and W.B. Yeats. Below left: Mme Blavatsky, and (left to right) Dr. G.S. Arundale, C. Jinarajadasa and N. Sri Ram, successive presidents of the Society.*

cannot be considered to be true progress. Most of us are still dazzled and blinded by their achievements.

Aurobindo believes that 'each nation is a *shakti* or power of the evolving spirit in humanity and lives by the principle which it embodies'. If so, a clash and conflict between nations is inevitable. In fact, he defines the three stages of the interaction between nations. These are, conflict and competition, concert, and sacrifice. At present, nations are in the first stage, that of competition and conflict. The second stage, that of co-operation, has hardly begun. People may talk of enlightened self-interest as the governing principle behind international diplomacy, but what it often is is a brutal self-interest disguised behind high-sounding principles. As to the third stage, that will only happen after a nation has realized its Self. At present, only individuals have attained that high degree of realization which allows them to sacrifice themselves for the good of others. 'The perfected *sannyasin*, the liberated man,' may consider self-defence to be needless, but ordinarily, 'to allow oneself to be killed, like the lamb attacked by the wolf, brings no growth, farther no development, assures no spiritual unity', writes Aurobindo. Concert and unity, may come in the future, but for the present, we must go through conflict and competition.

There has been a perennial conflict for supremacy between Europe and Asia. In this conflict, either Asia will become Europeanized or Europe Asiaticised. William Archer's attack on India is a part of Europe's hegemonizing drive. First was the



attack on Hinduism by the missionaries. That was successfully fended off, not only by a Hindu revival, but by west to east movements like Theosophy. Now, the second wave of the attack is not religious, but rationalistic and materialistic. (There is actually a third wave which Aurobindo doesn't mention. This is modern science and technology.) Asia is rising, but this empowerment is not fully self-conscious. It is a Europeanised Asia that is rising, an Asia which has turned its back on the Asiatic ideal.

'Spirituality is not the monopoly of India,' but elsewhere it lies submerged beneath veils of intellectualism. What makes India special is 'spirituality made the leading motive and the determining power of both the inner and the outer life' which is quite different from 'spirituality suppressed, allowed only under disguises or brought in as a minor power, its reign denied or put off in favour of the intellect or of a dominant materialistic vitalism'. In other words, many other nations of Asia, from Turkey to Japan, have 'grown rationalistic and materialistic; India alone is still obstinately recalcitrant'. So, in this conflict between India and Europe, 'will the spiritual motive which India represents prevail on Europe and create there new forms congenial to the West, or will European rationalism put an end for ever to the Indian type of culture?' — this is the crucial question, the question at the heart of the *Foundations of Indian culture*.

There are several people who have told me how uncomfortable they feel with this framework of confrontation. There are three chief ways in which their discomfort is articulated. On the one hand they claim that both Aurobindo in particular and Indian spirituality in general are universal. There is no distinction between countries and cultures. So, why am I harping on this conflict between India and the West? The second kind of objection comes from those who are quite comfortable with the level of synthesis that they seem to have achieved between India and the modern world. They have made the required adjustments and believe that we can

have the best of both worlds. What is the need to confront the West or to confront ourselves?

The third kind of objection comes from those who consider Aurobindo to be both outdated and essentialistic. They believe that such generalisations about cultures and civilisations are arrogant and unjustified. That each individual is different and it is pointless to attribute any special characteristics to nations, people or communities.

I shall respond only briefly to these interjections. Let me put my case rhetorically: what does it matter if Indian civilisation is destroyed? So many civilisations have been destroyed in the past. Why not let this one be destroyed too? Actually, that is what these objections really imply, but they don't say so clearly. If that is what we believe, then that is what will happen. It will happen by default, if not by

***Gandhi believed in an aggressive ahimsa, not in cowardly non-violence.***

deliberation. There is a Latin American proverb which comes to mind: when the axe came to cut the trees, some trees said that the handle is one of us. The question is not that of us versus them, but about two competing and conflicting value systems. To those of us who love India and what she stands for, the question of protecting Indian civilisation or of fending off the West does not even arise. There is no choice here; we must live or die according to our beliefs. We don't need any special inducements or incentives to work for this ideal. To me, every Indian is a *sadhak* or *sadhika*, whether we realize it or not. This is a *punya bhoomi*, a holy land, where every inch of soil has been irradiated by the *tapas* of our seers. Ultimately, it does not matter if we are defeated or if we triumph. What is important is to uphold the life that we believe in.

Aurobindo urges us not to a vigorous self-defence as Woodroffe had advocated: 'But defence by itself in the modern struggle can only end in defeat, and if battle there must be, the only sound strategy is a vigorous

aggression based on a strong, living and mobile defence'. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he does not advocate a weak-kneed, apologetic response to global aggression. He is saying that if our ideal is worth preserving, we must be bold and take the battle into the enemy's camp. This is precisely what Swami Vivekananda did. Similarly, Gandhi believed in an aggressive *ahimsa*, not in cowardly non-violence. Indian spirituality, thus, needs to be aggressive, not cowardly.

In the concluding paragraph of this section, Aurobindo explains what he means by aggressive spirituality:

'India must defend herself by reshaping her cultural forms to express more powerfully, intimately and perfectly her ancient ideal. Her aggression must lead the waves of light thus liberated in triumphant self-expanding rounds all over the world which it once possessed or at least enlightened in far-off ages.'

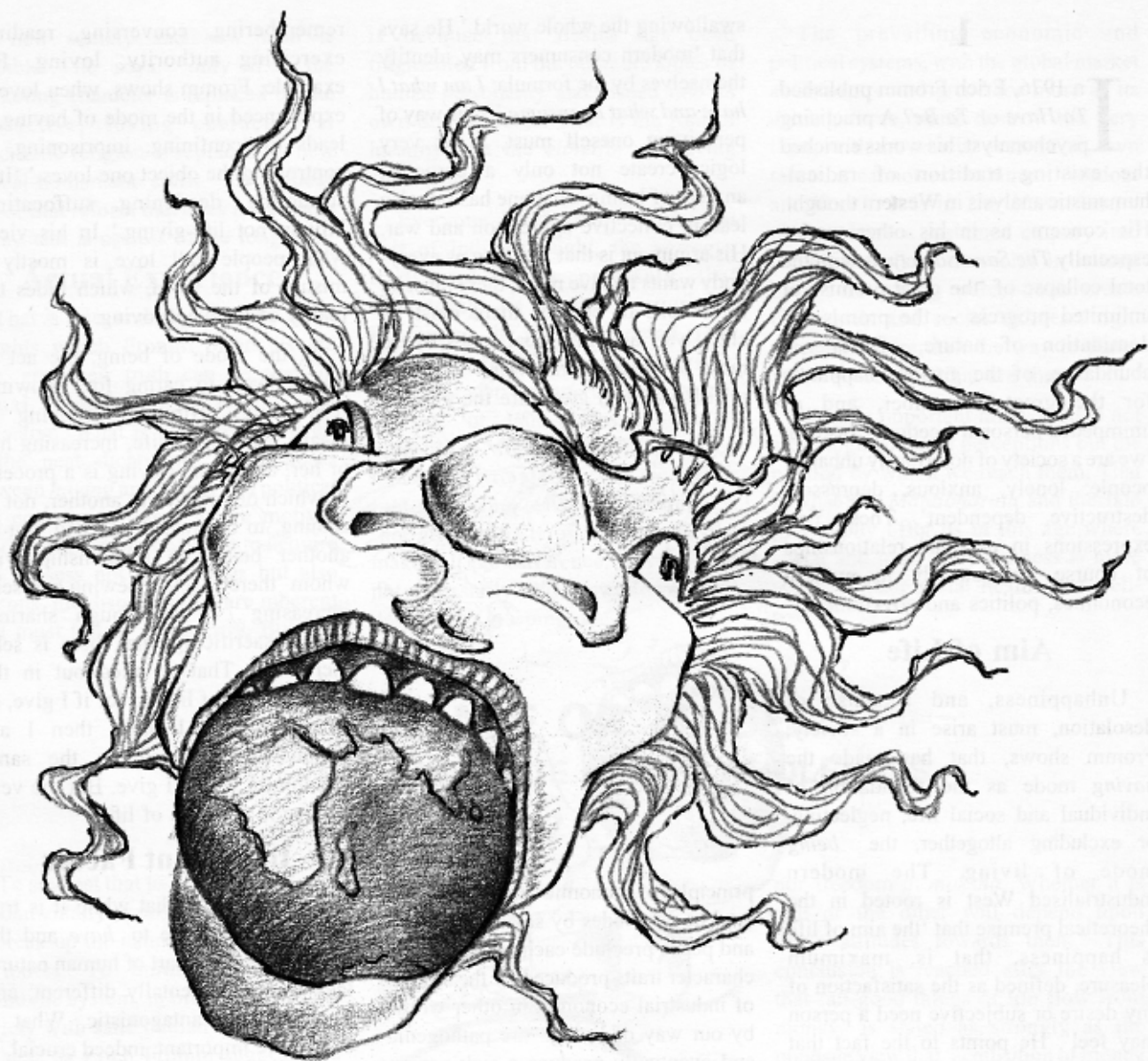
Fuji Gururji, the well-known Japanese saint and friend of Mahatma Gandhi and the Rev. Samdhong Rinpoche, Director of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies believed that India had this special responsibility towards the rest of the world. That we could dare to be different. The beginning must be made here and now.

Aurobindo ends on a note of hope and optimism for those who dislike conflicts. He says 'An appearance of conflict must be admitted for a time, for as long as the attack of an opposite culture continues.' This very conflict will 'culminate in the beginning of a concert on a higher plane'. Prophetic words indeed...

#### ***End of Part I***

**M**akarand Paranjape is one of India's leading poets. He has been published widely in areas of criticism, fiction and translation. He has also edited anthologies of poetry. He was awarded the Homi Bhabha Fellowship for Literature in 1991. Currently he is Associate Professor, Dept. Of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi.





## TO HAVE OR TO BE SICK SYSTEMS, SICK HUMAN BEINGS

CHATURVEDI BADRINATH

*How much have is have? The desire to **have** and to **be** are both part of human nature, but should they be mutually antagonistic? Is there a neat dichotomy between the two? The author argues that we should not concern ourselves with the endless debates that centre around either/or questions. Instead, he exhorts us to examine the meaning of wealth and the underlying premises of its acquisition. To move from the 'passivity of **having** to the creativity of **being**' seems to be the chief argument of this article.*

*To strengthen it he draws links between **The Mahabharata** and Erich Fromm's contemporary book by the above name.*

In 1976, Erich Fromm published *To Have or To Be?* A practising psychoanalyst, his works enriched the existing tradition of radical-humanistic analysis in Western thought. His concern, as in his other works, especially *The Sane Society*, is with the total collapse of 'the great promise of unlimited progress -- the promise of domination of nature, of material abundance, of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, and of unimpeded personal freedom'. Instead, 'we are a society of notoriously unhappy people: lonely, anxious, depressed, destructive, dependent'. These find expressions in personal relationships of course, but equally in modern economics, politics and government.

### Aim of Life

Unhappiness, and a sense of desolation, must arise in a society. Fromm shows, that has made the *having* mode as the foundation of individual and social life, neglecting or excluding altogether, the *being* mode of living. The modern industrialised West is rooted in the theoretical premise that 'the aim of life is happiness, that is, maximum pleasure, defined as the satisfaction of any desire or subjective need a person may feel'. He points to the fact that 'the present era, by and large since the First World War, has returned to the practice and theory of radical hedonism'. But that premise was always false. A great many people now know that unrestricted satisfaction of all desires, even if it were possible, is not conducive to *well-being*, nor is it the way to happiness or even to maximum pleasure, however, the systems of the western industrial economy can only exist on the premise that 'the very essence of being is having; that if one has nothing, one is nothing'.

And to have, is to consume. Fromm argues that consuming as one form of having is perhaps the most important one for today's affluent industrial society. At the root of it, though, is the desire to *incorporate*. 'The attitude inherent in consumerism is that of

swallowing the whole world.' He says that 'modern consumers may identify themselves by the formula: *I am what I have and what I consume*.' This way of perceiving oneself must, in its very logic, create not only a perpetual anxiety of losing what one has but also lead to collective aggression and war. His argument is that 'As long as everybody wants to have more, there must be formations of classes, there must be class war, and in global terms, there must be international war.' Egotism, selfishness, and greed are the guiding



principles of economic behaviour today. And he concludes by saying the greed and peace preclude each other. For the character traits produced by the system of industrial economy, in other words by our way of living, 'are pathogenic and eventually produce a sick person and, thus, a sick society.'

In the being mode of living, I perceive myself not in terms of what I *have* but what I *am*. I move from the passivity of having to the creativeness of being. This change is then reflected in every aspect of living: learning,

***When love is experienced in the mode of having, it leads to 'confining, imprisoning, or controlling the object one loves.' 'It is strangling, deadening, suffocating, killing, not life-giving.' In his view, what people call love is mostly a misuse of the word, which hides the reality of their not loving.***

remembering, conversing, reading, exercising authority, loving. For example, Fromm shows, when love is experienced in the mode of having, it leads to 'confining, imprisoning, or controlling the object one loves.' 'It is strangling, deadening, suffocating, killing, not life-giving.' In his view, what people call love is mostly a misuse of the word, which hides the reality of their not loving.

In the mode of being, the act of loving leads to caring for, knowing, responding, affirming, enjoying. It means bringing to life, increasing his, or her, aliveness. Loving is a process, in which one relates to another, not as a thing, to be owned and had, but as another being, in relationship with whom 'there is self-renewing and self-increasing'. It is through sharing, giving, sacrificing, that there is self-increasing. That is ruled out in the having mode of living; for if I give, or sacrifice, what I have, then I am diminished, depleted, in the same measure in which I give. But the very reverse is the truth of life.

### Important Factor

Fromm argues that while it is true that both the desire to *have* and the desire to *be* are a part of human nature, they are fundamentally different, and also mutually antagonistic. What is even more important, indeed crucial, is the fact that depending upon the kind of social and economic structure a society has, it will encourage the one rather than the other. And that will decide whether the individuals living under that system are inwardly healthy or mentally sick. A society, as in the industrialised West, 'whose principles are acquisition, profit, and property produce a social character oriented towards having, and once the dominant pattern is established, nobody wants to be an outsider, or indeed an outcast; in order to avoid this risk, everybody adapts to the majority'.

From the analysis of *having* and *being* as the two fundamentally opposite human impulses, Fromm derives his vision of the future, and suggests a concrete agenda of economic and political change. 'The realisation of



the new society and new man is possible', he says. 'only if... the marketing character is replaced by the productive, loving character; if cybernetic religion is replaced by new radical-humanistic spirit.' To propose this or that reform that does not change the system is useless in the long run.

## Actual Experience

That is true, and a great many other insights which Fromm offers us are true, and their truth can be seen in actual experience, personal and collective. What is not true, however, is the neat dichotomy he proposes between *having* and *being*. In a political and economic system where motives are determined by the desire to acquire and possess not only things but also persons, the disorders that are inherent in it must follow necessarily. But that

is because that desire has been fragmented from the other attributes of human personality and turned into its own driving force. That is the root of insanity, not the *either/or* of having and being.

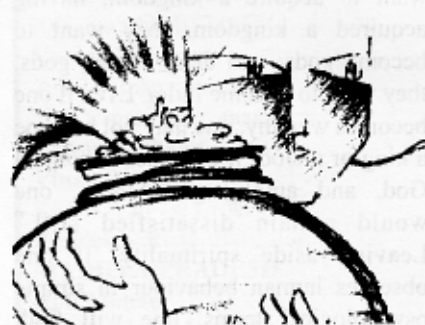
Everyone knows that a dominant part of Indian thought, the *vairagya* tradition, makes precisely that dichotomy its central argument. Examining it in great detail, *The Mahabharata* shows how untrue it is, and how very dangerous. A central doctrine of Jain philosophy is *a-parigraha*, which has always been translated, wrongly, as 'not-having' or 'not-possessing'. Its true meaning is 'not-grasping'. It is the latter that makes all the difference. Having does not necessarily lead to swallowing and destroying, grasping does.

The prevailing economic and political systems, with the global market as its centre and greed for more as its driving force, must destroy the very thing without which, even in its own terms, it cannot exist: human freedom and liberty. It is in *The Mahabharata* that we have a sustained enquiry into the proper place of wealth in human living. If wrong perceptions create individuals and social sickness, right perceptions are then the way to peace and well-being. What are they?

What is important most of all is not a catalogue of right perceptions but the method by which we reach them. That is what *The Mahabharata* and the Jain philosophy offer us in this age where social and individual sickness is more common than social health and well-being.

# TO HAVE OR TO BE BOTH - WITHIN INNATE HUMAN WHOLENESS

2



To suggest that to *have* and to *be* are fundamentally opposed to each other is to break up the natural unity of human attributes. To build a social and economic system, in order to be a sane society with sane human beings, if we replace, as Erich Fromm suggests we should, having with being, then eventually we create another kind of violence. That is inherent in perceiving man and the world in the logical framework of *either/or*. And it is in that framework that all political ideologies of the West are located, like the modern western thought in its entirety up to the advent of the quantum theory, but also after that.

*The Mahabharata* is perfectly familiar with the logic of *either/or*, but demonstrates that logic does not belong to the true nature of reality, which enfolds within itself many seemingly contradictory attributes. That position is expanded theoretically further in the Jain *anekantavada*, or the Jain philosophical theory of the many-sidedness of truth.

The place of wealth in human

living; the attitudes which its possession or the lack of it, riches or poverty, generate; the kind of life, personal and social, which as a consequence they produce; the manner in which they determine the quality of relationships; and whether, as their result, there is freedom and justice or bondage and oppression — these are the central issues in *The Mahabharata*. They are taken up in other works too, but nowhere as systematically as in the *Mahabharata*.

## Dharmic Disdain

The substance of that enquiry is, as *The Mahabharata* says, 'There is neither necessary bondage in wealth

nor freedom in *moksha*. Whether it is one or the other will depend upon one's attitudes towards them.' This conclusion is reached after the view that 'all good things of life flow from money' is stated as strongly as the opposite view that 'acquisition of money is the main source eventually of all disorder and violence, personal and collective.' Eulogy of wealth, and the awareness of its hold upon human affairs, were a notable part of *dharmic* cultures in all ages and times. Equally notable in all ages was the *dharmic* disdain of wealth and its apparent power.

*The Mahabharata* as well as *The Panchatantra*, indeed the whole of *niti* literature, with utmost candour and realism, attached great importance to wealth as long as one lived in society. Arjuna, the advocate of that view, says, "Whoever has wealth, has friends as well; whoever has wealth, has his family and clan with him; only he who has wealth, is known as a man; and, then, only he is considered to be learned." "Just as small streams dry up

in summer, so the efforts of a man without wealth come to nothing. From increased wealth flow all the good works, as the rivers flow from the mountains"; "for him who has no wealth, there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next."

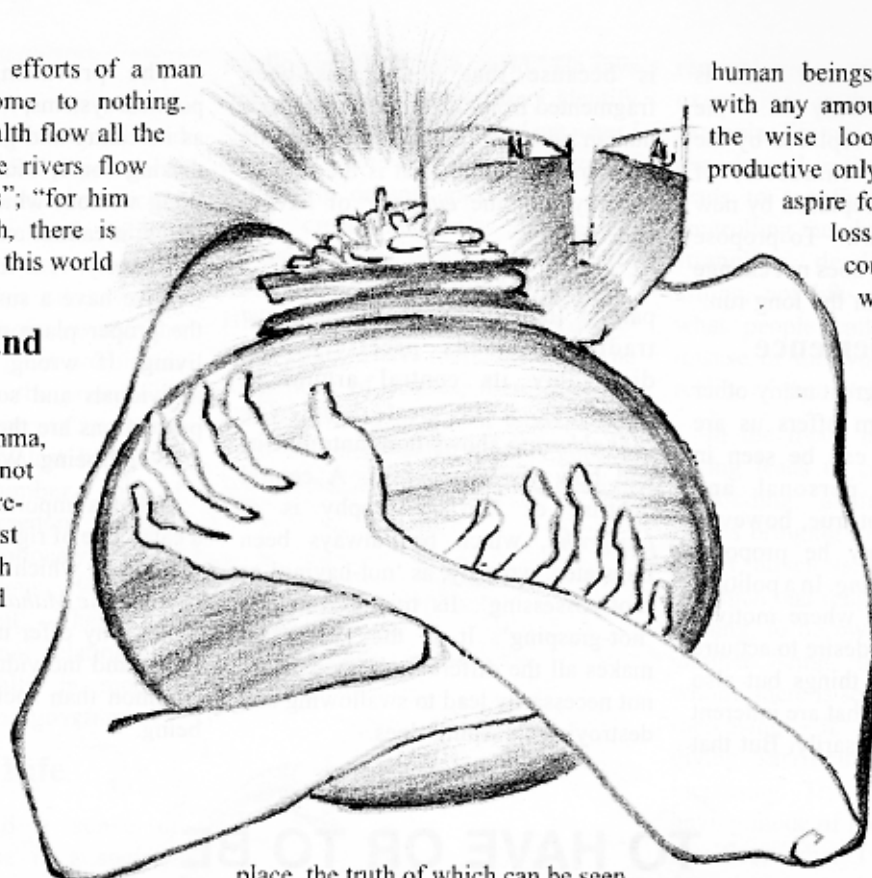
## Treasury and Army

The dying Bhishma, immensely wise but not coarse like Arjuna, reinforces the utmost necessity of wealth for one who would be king. His propositions are clear and straightforward. The strength of the king is based on treasury and army; army is based on treasury; the social order is based on army; and the people are based on *dharma*. Where is the treasury, when a king is weak; and army, where there is no treasury? If there is no army, how can there be kingdom; and majesty, if there is not kingdom?

***Taking up social order as its concern, the dharmic aim was to prevent the necessity of wealth from turning into greed, and greed into lawlessness.***

The king whose treasury is empty, is treated with indifference even by common men; nobody is satisfied with the little that he gives, and none is eager to work for him. Only due to his wealth is a king successful in whatever he does. Therefore, let the king fill his treasury; having filled it, protect it; protecting it, increase it, for in all ages that is the *dharma* of the king. However, unlike the propositions of Arjuna, what Bhishma says is subject to important qualifications which he mentions in the same breath.

The other truth concerning wealth is stated mainly by Yudhishtira. His argument is psychological in the first



place, the truth of which can be seen by everybody, including those who base everything in life upon money and wealth. "On acquiring wealth, men want to acquire a kingdom; having acquired a kingdom, they want to become gods; and then, among gods, they want to become Indra. Even if one becomes wealthy, one may not become a king or a God; if one does become a God, and among gods Indra, one would remain dissatisfied still." Leaving aside spirituality, if one observes human behaviour in simple psychological terms, one will find, according to *The Mahabharata*, that wealth must produce greed, and from greed must arise a host of other inclinations, all destructive of happiness and peace.

The paradox that wealth must produce discontent, was brought up everywhere in *dharmic* literature in one context or another. *The Bhagavad Purana* observes, 'Desire for food ends with hunger appeased, and anger subsides with its purpose achieved; but should one conquer and enjoy even the whole universe, there would still be no end to one's greed.' 'It is difficult to earn wealth', *The Mahabharata* says, 'painful to part with it, nor is there pleasure in guarding it, and of course

human beings are never satisfied with any amount of it; seeing this, the wise look upon wealth as productive only of pain, and neither aspire for it nor grieve at the loss of it. The rich are in constant fear of the king, water, fire, thief, and relatives, just as all human beings are in constant fear of death.'

Perceptions such as these did not entail an outright denunciation of wealth and of its place in human life. Neither did they imply any advocacy of poverty. The picture of the ills that come from owning wealth was drawn, in the first

place, to balance the extreme view that material wealth is everything. The *dharmic* balance, far from being mechanical, or one of finding a middle position between two absolutely opposed points of view, consisted in the acknowledgment that human beings are diverse in their capacities, and have numerous perceptions, not all of equal value, but all deserving recognition. Hence there were contexts in which it was legitimate to regard wealth as a primary factor, and there were contexts in which it was foolish to do so. Given the economic functions of the world, and in them the importance of wealth, there remained still the need of social control over the means of acquisition of wealth and its use. Taking up social order as its concern, the *dharmic* aim was to prevent the necessity of wealth from turning into greed, and greed into lawlessness.

## Main Qualification

The qualification which Bhishma attaches to his statements on the importance of wealth is as crucial as they are important. While it is undeniable that wealth and *kama*, the latter, a pursuit of sexual pleasure, are

central among human attributes; wealth should be earned through *dharma*, never through *adharma*. What that means is that desire for wealth and its fruits as a natural attribute of human beings must never be wrenched from the other attributes and turned into the only goal of life. When that happens, that goal turns upon itself and becomes self-destructive, but not without destroying so much else besides. That is true of sexual desire as well. The collective experience of life clearly tells us that their fulfilment is possible only within the wholeness of human attributes. ☸



Illustrations: Oroon  
From a two-part serial in the  
*Times of India*.

**E**veryone knows Chaturvedi Badrinath as the '*dharma person*'! For he writes and talks copiously on the subject. His career in the Indian Administrative Service spanned thirty three years. He was given a Homi Bhabha Fellowship from 1971-73 for research on *Dharma* and its implications on the human condition. Badri, as he is known to friends, lives in Delhi, lecturing and writing.

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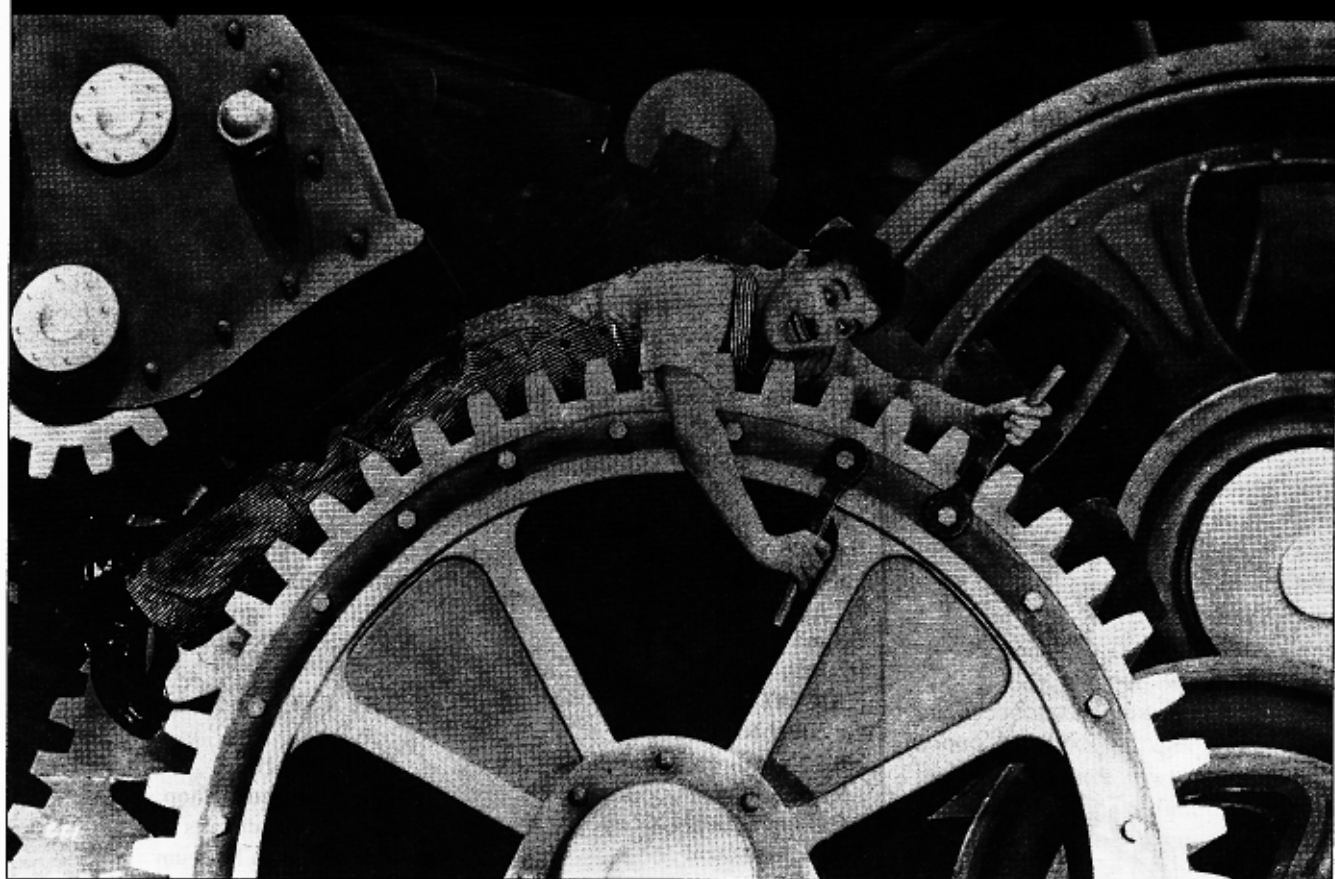
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# FOLIE À DEUX

## — A GAME WITH OUR DESTINY



Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*. The nuts and bolts of modern industrial life.

SUSHANTA BANERJEE

*Are we wearing one huge national mask which hides a deep and ugly disfigurement? Are we as citizens wallowing in myopic vanity? Are we like Eliot's hollow men, getting increasingly to be a 'paralysed force'.. 'leaning together, headpiece filled with straw'? The author, in this searing article, tells us, for our own good, to look where we **need** to look not where it's **easy** to look.*

**T**he last one hundred and fifty years have brought to man, albeit a small fraction, dramatic power over materials and spectacular mobility — even into outer space. Airline advertisements even claim that a journey from Delhi to London can be performed at the same cost per kilometre as it does to take a taxi.

Technology has made available now, products for consumption, pleasure and elimination of drudgery. It has created channels for flow of information at a speed heretofore inconceivable. It

has also brought forth drugs and cures, inconceivable till now.

Technology has precipitated the formation of organizations of a kind that have fostered a push to integrate machine man and production processes to an extent where, the closer you are to the machine the more you are an extension of it. (Recall Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*). Technology has become a major player in creating man's history and even perhaps his destiny. The whole world is busily engaged in keeping apace of technological developments thus

generating employment, providing income and raising levels of wealth. In a way technology has become omnipresent — the paper you are now holding as you read these words is the production of several machines and many more men with families fed on the income. So also the ink with which the words were printed.

The basic sciences have dazzled man with the power, or more realistically (as we shall see later) sense and illusion of power, over materials. It has created an illusion and the belief that all of man's problems



and needs can be addressed and resolved with this power.

Science and technology having become omnipresent, are now on the verge of being *seen* as omniscient. It even created the fantastic hope that science will replace mythology and fulfill the needs of a sense of higher purpose thus replacing man's need for God and religion. The commentator read out a script while the visual showed the first flight of the Wright Brothers, "and thus man conquered the skies ....". Clearly, vanity unbounded, arising from the illusion of power.

In more concrete social manifestation, science and technology have led to the spawning of economic and business activity that rule the world today. Witness the gradual replacement of the adjective 'Royal' with the new one 'Executive'. You have it in product descriptions — instead of 'Royal' class you now have 'Executive' class. Organizations have emerged now in forms, processes and architecture that are the result of Weber, Taylor and Henry Ford, in their efforts to maximise the exploitation of technological processes. Even governments run on these basic principles.

*In its ultimate form the eroded value of belief and faith even got eulogised in the writings of Ayn Rand.*

All these three outstanding men of their times represented the last frontier of the Victorian era where men and objects were held in the same class. Wealth and 'station' in life of an individual were the sole determinants of the freedom he had the right to claim. Freedom was not a psychological phenomenon or need but a socio-political resource and luxury. That was also the era when in the West there emerged a large scale psychological conflict between social taboos and man's need for freedom.

These taboos were broken after acquiring enormous rigidity so that after the two wars the West saw a sexual revolution and the emergence of various movements of psychological revolt as seen in the beatniks and hippies. However these were only transformations that led to the emergence of the hollow people — identified first by T.S. Eliot

*We are the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
Shape without form, shade  
without colour,  
Paralysed force, gesture  
without motion; ...*

and recognised subsequently by psychotherapists like Rollo May, David Riesman and others.

Seeded in the age of the European Renaissance, science also promoted the concept — as a value — of secularism. Quite rightfully, reformers of that age demonstrated that the Church dogmatically held world views that were evidently untenable. The battle continued albeit with diminishing vigour until modern times where, the bedrock of science, evidence and repeatability, were used to challenge the very processes of belief and faith. In its ultimate form, the eroded value of belief

and faith even got eulogised in the writings of Ayn Rand. Manipulativeness became an accepted interface between people, giving rise to pop psychology manifested in the works of Dale Carnegie and others. Human relatedness was no longer a fundamental phenomenon, but pushed into being seen as just another resource that can be or needs to be manipulated towards satisfying some need, it became a means to an end. Progressively man's higher needs have got relegated to secondary status creating a major disbalance in favour of satisfaction of needs, thus fostering the acquisition of wealth and assets, as the chief purpose of life.

Psychotherapists began to receive patients now with problems of meaninglessness along with the emptiness of the 50s and 60s. The greatest set of conflicts manifested themselves in fragility of relationships and anxieties with relating and relatedness. Intense loneliness began to set in, generating a whole new school that began to look at *identity*, not only at psychology.

The power at hand, from science and technology, were used to create an arsenal that can finish life on earth over seven times at the latest estimate. Industry progressed at rapid rates — the 'developed' nations consuming the world's resources at 30 times the rate of the 'under-developed' world. And of



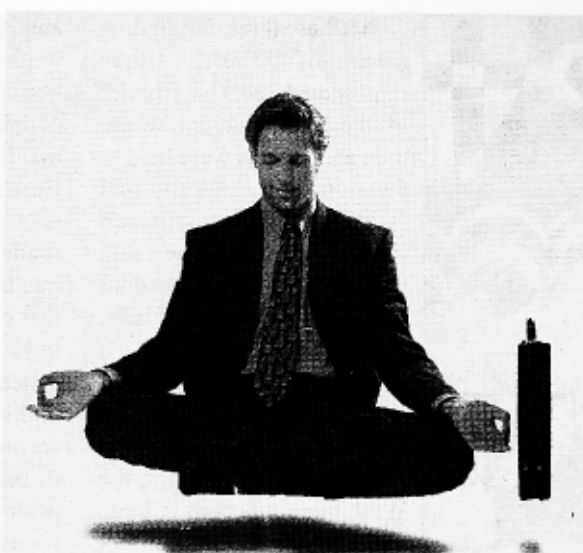
*Science and technology are the new rulers of the business world. Airlines use the word 'Executive' to replace 'Royal'.*

course as a value, development has come to mean increase of wealth. The consequence of science and technology is not the issue, the issue is the *management* of these and the consequences of this process of its management.

The unintended consequences of science and technology being given the pre-eminence it has been given are unfolding into a curse. Not only is it technologically unfeasible to repeat the western story with a blind hope of success, it is certainly a recipe for a major destructive struggle with our own collective identity.

Let us look at the scene in India. The urban industry/business related society has absorbed the western ethos, intellectually. The production economic dimension is the sole dimension that is held as valid and the social dimensions are viewed as a set of problematic needs to fulfill lacunae and satisfy the needs that, if India were a western country, the administration there would fulfill. A large scale split has emerged in which the ideals are western while the emotive world of feelings and sentiments are Indian. The psycho-spiritual dimension has been ignored, devalued and nearly forgotten in all planning and management/administrative processes.

In the main, organizations are seen by their own inmates as a political marketplace, where each one is in it for his own personal gain. While emotively, members within, have a wish that the organization should feel like a community, in actual fact it is more often experienced as a battleground of



*Fake psycho-spiritual dimension in management and administrative processes. (From an ad. for United Airlines).*

realpolitik and cold war, where the rewards have to be extracted and subordinates kept under tight control lest they raise their heads and overshoot. Organizations are viewed as if they were machines. In short, the centre of the organization is its machinery and the people around it are an extension of the machinery. People start treating each other as such too. In the net, organizations, as if by the power of some unseen hand or presence, are creating the very same victorian assumptions of man as was ruefully commented upon in T.S. Eliot's poem as the 'hollow men', part mercenary, part arrogant and existentially in deep conflict of emptiness and meaninglessness.

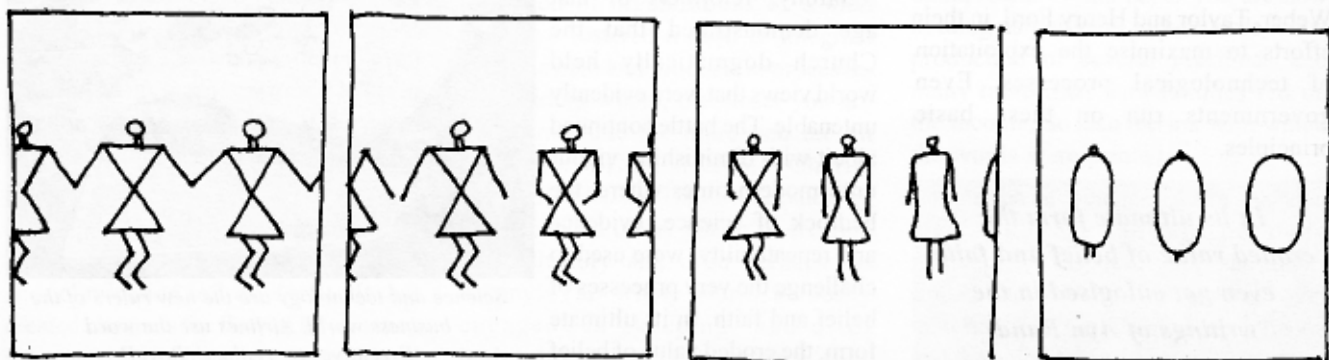
On the face of our own history of a thousand years of oppression, ravagement, pillage and loot, the implant of technology has remained a foreign body. We have not discovered the audacity to be able to design or

invent, creativity in most spheres is discarded in favour of import from the West and sociologically we have at hand a large scale phenomenon of what looks like corruption and is nothing else but a self-looting process. After a thousand years of brutality we now brutalise ourselves.

At the existential level, India is caught with the consequences of a history in which we have been stripped of our own identity. We carry a name bequeathed upon us by alien invaders; it is based on a river which is not a part of the country any more. We are under pressure to jettison our identity as if it were a gangrenous part of an injured body. We bring in frames from alien cultures and instead of creating an understanding of ourselves only arrive at fresh condemnations.

To raise our children we deny them a mother tongue in favour of English. Youth today have no heroes, in this vacuum — even Harshad Mehta gets pulled in as a 'why not' hero. Liberalisation has brought a synthetic West into our television and paucity of funds makes the Indian channels bring us cheap look alikes of American super heroes. Many of the youth today, predict that they will face utter meaninglessness in their mid-thirties. Most of them wonder what purpose they have in life anyway. These are all progressive signs of the consequences of the collective stripping or loss of identity. The pressure is to desperately create a synthetic identity. All systems of affiliation — be it family, marriage or community are fraught with fragmentation, alienation and stress.

*Becoming faceless.....*





Back to the macro scene, every decade since independence India told herself "we are about to make it". Whether in the sixties the buzzword was an economy about to take off, or later 'a threshold economy' or now liberalised and about to become an Asian Tiger – the place we are at is the same – the *deja vu* is intense.

It is a place where we, to try and get to where we want (an economic high), we believe we ought not to be ourselves (as told to us by the West – see, no Olympic medals, see, no Nobel Prizes, see China, Japan, now Malaysia, Thailand, Korea are better than you Indians).

The issue is where do we wish to go now. To continue with the discards of the West is demeaning, self defeating and undignifying. It is a delusion of a future which in reality shows no real signs of being different. For the simple reason that the deep disturbance of our own identity processes will not find a resolution with the present trends. Our own sense of poor collective self worth remains totally unaddressed. However, well we achieve the full exploitation of whatever we borrow, it will always be a pale shadow. We are certainly not in a position to compete with them on any significant scale. In any case to deal with the issue of collective self worth we need to work with ourselves rather than go on comparing ourselves with the West. The lure of the good living that the West has put up is not really our target – it is not part of the Indian psyche nor in fact is it achievable given the present state of the biosphere. We need to set our own agenda without fear of being different from the rest of the world and find an equation with the rest of the world in deference to the difference rather than struggle to be a 'me too' and never finding our 'I'. Here it may be worthwhile to refer to Arnold Toynbee's work wherein he identifies 'elan' as a primary source of strength of the growth and efflorescence of societies. If the core identity of a society is in distress, finding this elan will be impossible. And in the face of repeated self defeating moves the identity would acquire further self hate from ourselves.

We need to set our own goals. I shall give myself the audacity to propose a few here.

Introduce an Indian agenda in the education process. The focus on our own history must be increased. Let the physical culture, we so desperately borrow from the West be enhanced with eastern physical culture. This can include Yoga, Kalaripayat and classicism. Not as performing arts but as personal training and body-mind recalibration. Let the unfolding of the psyche and the being be the prime targets of the education process without romanticising these. We over-



educate our children as if the academic performance itself is the goal. Let schools institutionalise spiritual teaching without making it denominational. Begin serious counselling in schools to assist the formation of the identity of the child. Let this counselling spread to the area of family counselling for the parents too.

In the international arena we should develop a single minded focus of generating equality of nations. Focus singlemindedly on the role of the western world in perpetuating Third World poverty rather than look for aid. To quote Norman Myers in his article, *What Ails the Globe?*

'Rich nations account for a quarter of the world's human population but consume three-quarters of the world's natural resources and generate three quarters of its waste and pollution. People dump 70,000 synthetic chemicals into the environment annually, after only minimal testing against only a few recognised threats.

If rich nations were to open their markets to exports from the developing world, as they do to one another's exports, Third World revenues would sky rocket by \$ 100 billion yearly, twice as much as all foreign aid presently offers. Ending Third World poverty would in turn strengthen the global economy because developing nations would offer many new markets.'

Within the country, open up doors for value based communication rather than mindlessly promoting consumerism which will only increase the disparity of incomes and continue to undermine our own collective identity.

The training of our administrative and bureaucratic manpower needs to be re-designed and uprooted from its archaic British foundation so that the graduates emerging from these are free of the classical split. The split is that the love for their own country is a sentimental process while these feelings are weighed down with the stress of collective low self-worth. This leads to an outlook of being problem solvers rather than direction finders. The present system fosters a frame in which Indians are looked down upon as people who need to be brought to the standards set by the West, a basically unsympathetic, proselytising approach.

Bring the captains of industry together to not only look at business scenarios but also at social scenarios. Foster their sense of responsibility and debt to the environment rather than collude with the invisible power of the assumption that business is a game of exploiting the environment. ❧

*Illustrations: Rupam Bhattacharya*

**S**ushanta Banerjee is a teacher, consultant and researcher. He is a Behavioural Scientist, having specialised in experience-based learning grounded on Eastern assumptions. He lectures all over India. He is currently teaching organisational behaviour at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

# UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL INDIAN SCULPTURE

PRABHAKAR V. BEGDE

*This issue of THE EYE has a new theme on the inside front cover — concepts in classical Indian sculpture. We will be continuing with this theme over the next three issues. We felt, that in order to understand it better, an overview on the subject was very much in order. The author has very kindly obliged. Although the article is very general, it does tell us about that very special component that is unique to Indian sculpture — the saga of the spirit enshrined in stone.*

Indian sculpture, vibrant and pulsating, provides an eloquent commentary on the behavioural patterns of society during various periods of Indian history. Apart from free-standing stone sculptures, entire rock surfaces provided large canvases for depicting life in all its colours. Temples of the classical period can be aptly described as 'architectonic sculptures' showing the exuberance of Indian artists. Themes ranging from religion to mythology to literature, have been variously and vigorously depicted. This unique relationship between a people and their art and literature together formed a classic fusion which evolved its own distinctive melody and rhythm that is at once awe-inspiring and exciting for the civilized world. Louis Frederic writes:

'In few countries is the art so intimately intermingled with the life and political adventures of the people. For us, the temples of India are not only religious books written in stone, but is the very history of those who built them. Here, more than anywhere else, the stones are evocative even if their meaning is mysterious and esoteric.'

Since Indian civilization has always been dominated by metaphysical preoccupations, it continuously emphasises on the spiritual. Indian sculpture, however realistic it may be, is highly symbolic. The aim of symbolism is to resolve the conflict between the material and spiritual worlds. Religious philosophy, translated into symbolism, was adopted most conspicuously in both religious as well as secular art and architecture.

In India, philosophy is less analytical and more a vehicle of attaining salvation (*moksha*) from ignorance (*avidya*). The complete synthesis of Indian thought, feeling and imagination has proved exceedingly favourable for art in its plastic and linear forms, assimilating in it, the truths and values of the metaphysical order.

Indian philosophy expounds two metaphysical notions. One, the belief in the transcendent reality or being (*atman/brahman*) into which are fused the values of goodness (*shivam*), beauty (*sundaram*), infinitude (*anantam*), silence (*shantam*), and beatitude (*anantam*), and the idea of absolute value and status of man as being (*tat*) and becoming (*sat*). Art in India has evolved techniques that makes for the synthesis of the mundane and the sublime as seen on the temple walls.

Hindu and Buddhist art share a common symbolism. Buddhist art like Hindu art depicts joy, beauty and serenity. The Buddhists have used Hindu deities like Surya and Indra in their art. The picture of Shiva in *yogic* meditation in Kalidasa's

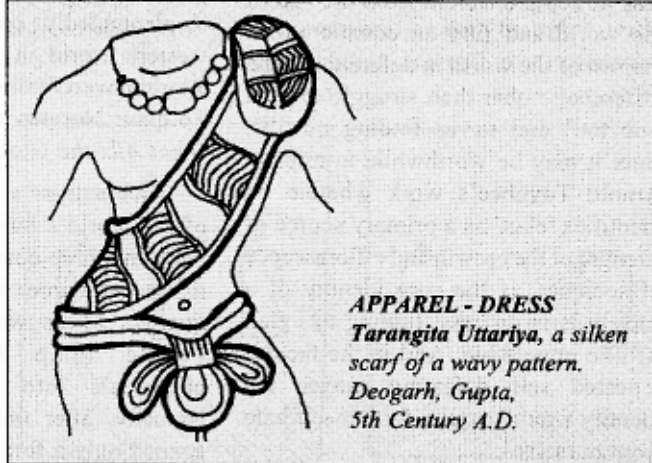
*Kumarasambhava* has an affinity with the image of the seated Buddha in Buddhist art. The use of *mudras* in forming a symbolic language is common to both Hindu and Buddhist art.

Water is one of the most important symbols for both, denoting the life-giving energy that also swallows all creation in the end. It is the creativity of Vishnu. The elephant is another motif which can be traced throughout Hindu as well as Buddhist art. The white elephant in particular, which symbolizes rain, fortune, longevity and abundance, is important to both



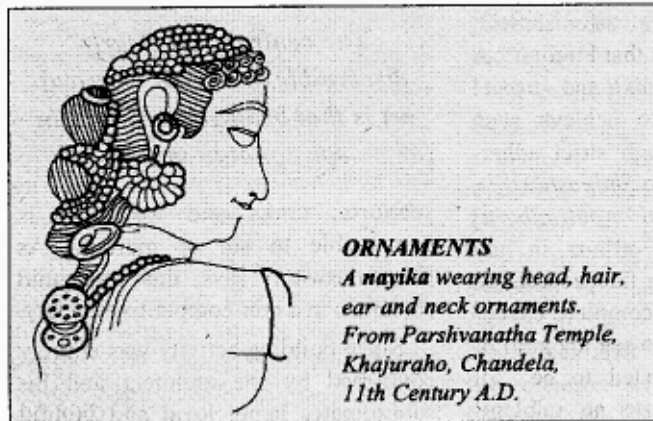
## SHRINGARA - THE EROTIC SENTIMENT

*Madhupana* - The act of lovers enjoying *madhupana* is often described by Kalidasa and so depicted in painting and sculpture. Ajanta, Gupta-Vakataka, 5th Century, A.D.



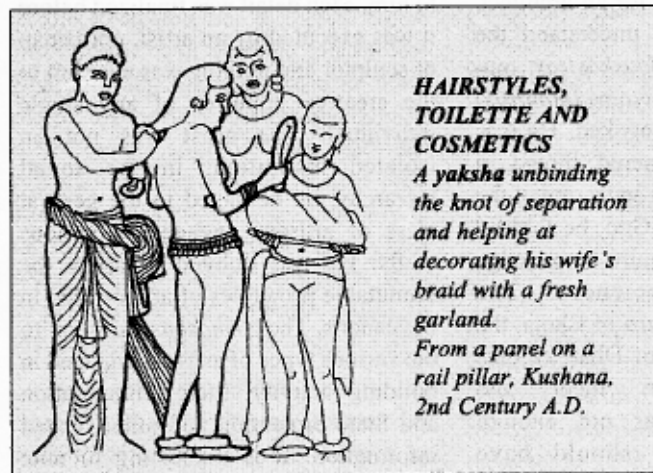
## APPAREL - DRESS

*Tarangita Uttariya*, a silken scarf of a wavy pattern. Deogarh, Gupta, 5th Century A.D.



#### ORNAMENTS

*A nayika wearing head, hair, ear and neck ornaments. From Parshvanatha Temple, Khajuraho, Chandela, 11th Century A.D.*



#### HAIRSTYLES, TOILETTE AND COSMETICS

*A yaksha unbinding the knot of separation and helping at decorating his wife's braid with a fresh garland. From a panel on a rail pillar, Kushana, 2nd Century A.D.*

– Airavata, the elephant of Indira was white; the elephant of Buddha when he was born as Prince Vessantara was also white.

Again, the *naga*, serpent, is a motif common to both Hindu and Buddhist art and is frequently depicted in an attitude of pious devotion on the portals of shrines. The lotus is another symbol shared by Hindu and Buddhist artists and the Lotus Goddess, Lakshmi, adorns early Buddhist monuments. She stands on a lotus pedestal in a characteristic posture, holding a lotus in her hand flanked by elephants dousing her with water. Zimmer says:

'It is extremely important to observe that the Buddhist and Hindu representations of such popular divinities do not differ from each other, either essentially or in detail, for

***Though Indian art forms are philosophical, they are realistic in their minute and fearless observation. Reality, instead of being veiled, is simply idealized.***

Buddhist or Hindu art – as also Buddhist or Hindu doctrine were in India, basically one.' The same holds good for the Jaina faith as well.

Though Indian art forms are philosophical, they are realistic in their minute and fearless observation. At the same time, it must be realized that the aim of Indian art is not just to evoke sensuous delight. Reality, instead of being veiled, is simply idealized.

The Darwinian term 'survival of the fittest' is applicable to art forms. Just like folk art, Indian classical

art has been able to sustain its intellectual appeal. Classical art was meant, in addition, to help the individual achieve his spiritual goal. Folk art is spontaneous; classical art is canonical. Folk art happened; classical art was made. This ageless, universal appeal of art has been aptly described by Pablo Picasso:

'If a work of art cannot live always in the present, it may not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of great painters who lived in other times is not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was.'

The Gupta age ushered in a glorious chapter of cultural attainment. Just as the Gupta age crystallized the *kavya* in literature and formulated the pattern of *puja* and festival, so did it codify and systematize the canons of Indian art. This is indicated by Huen Tsang's inclusion of *shilpashana-vidya* among the five *vidyas* or *shastras* in the scheme of education, presumably referring to the *Shilpashastras*. The *Shilpashastras* codified the symbols, motifs and forms of Indian images

(i.e. iconography together with *dhyanamantras* and *sadhanas*).

As Havell has observed, 'this new artistic development was in fact, the flowering of ancient Vedic impulse, the teaching of the *Upanishads* systematized by philosophical schools and applied to human life and work'. If the evolution of the canons of art was important and significant, it was also essential to translate these into art forms. It is in sculpture that Indian artists, over the centuries, found their favourite medium of expression.

In the art philosophy of India, the underlying religious ideals are contained in the doctrine of the 'three paths' leading to salvation – the way of work (*karma-marga*), the way of faith (*bhakti-marga*) and the way of knowledge (*gnana-marga*). The path of faith along with that of work was ideal for Indian artists who followed both with religious zeal. The combination of these two ways of attaining salvation in art, has no parallel in the history of world art. Havell observes, 'It is only when *bhakti* is lost and the whole spiritual basis of Indian art is superseded by the modern commercial instinct, when the Indian barter his birthright for a mass of pottage and manufactures by the yard for the markets of Europe, that it becomes incoherent and meretricious. And it is generally by this commercial trash that artistic Europe now judges India.'

The central idea clearly discernible in Indian classical art is that beauty is inherent in *spirit*, not in *matter*. The *Shukraniti* clearly lays down that while making images of gods, the artist should depend only upon spiritual vision, and not upon the appearance of the objects as perceived by the senses. All the same, naturalism and realism were not completely subordinated to the classical symbolism of iconographic values. Along with spiritual fervour was also the intense feeling of reverence and love of nature. The *Vishnudharmottara* clearly lays down that 'the painter should study the picture and mood of nature and depict the seasons he sees around him by the flowers and fruits on trees and the joy



or happiness of men, animals and birds.'

The most important aspect of sculptural art in India is the artist's mastery over the available material which was in enough abundance to accommodate each period, style and geographic region. The sculptures of the Mauryan period are in Chunar sandstone which takes on a beautiful sheen; the bas-reliefs of Sanchi are in dull red and grey sandstone; the Mathura sculptures in white-spotted sandstone; the Gandhara, Pala, Sena and Hoysala sculptures are in a schist of various colours; and those of Amaravati and Mount Abu in marble. The temples of the Deccan are in grey rock, trap or basalt abundantly found in the Western Ghats. Sandstone was the most readily available and most commonly used material. The canons of architecture and art go into considerable details of classification and sub-classification of various materials and their selection for appropriate use. Sculptors were so conscious of their skill that there are several stories recounted about them. According to a well-known story about an Indian craftsman, one sculptor's carving of a horse was so realistic that it almost seemed to come to life and take to wings, carrying the *vimana*, chariot, with its wheels, to heaven. The sculptor had to cut off a bit of its ear or some other part, to destroy its potency and bring it back to earth as a lifeless lithic carving. At Ellora, the famous rock-cut shrine, the Kailashanatha, built by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I (A.D. 768-772), represents a perfect fusion of art, architecture and painting. Here is a description from one of the two contemporary copper-plate inscriptions of the period:

'A temple (was caused to be constructed) on the hill of Elapura, a wonderful structure — on seeing which the best immortals who move in celestial cars, struck with astonishment, think much constantly, saying, this temple of Shiva is self-existent; in a thing made by art, such beauty is not seen, a temple the architect-builder of which, in consequence of the failure of his energy as regards (the construction of) another such work, was himself

suddenly struck with astonishment, saying 'Oh how was it that I built it!' A perfect example of *bhakti* and *karma*!

It was possible to achieve such perfection only through strict adherence to the canons, the *Shilpashastras*. The architect (*sthapati* or *sutradhara*) was at the helm of affairs in any building activity from the preparation of the design till its complete execution. It is interesting to see the kind of person he was expected to be. All *Shilpashastras* stipulate an unblemished moral character for an architect. He was expected to understand the *Atharvaveda*, the *Shilpashastras*, music, dance and *Vedic* hymns (*mantras*) by which deities are evoked. He was meant to wear a sacred thread, a necklace of holy beads and a ring of the *kusha* grass, worship God, be faithful to his wife and acquire knowledge of the various sciences. The *Samaranganasutradhara* of Bhoja, the great Paramara ruler of Dhar, enjoins that merely a skill in 'theory' and its 'application', was not enough in a *sthapati*. He should have *pratyutpanna-mati*, (ready wit), *prajna* (power of intuitive contemplation or meditation), modest behaviour and self-control.

It is evident, then, that the architect possessed an assured social status. Considering the social norms, this was also hereditary. He was trained from childhood as his father's disciple and followed his profession. There were guilds of architects recognized by the ruling monarchy which protected architects from competition and undercutting. It is said, 'Should any person other than the *sthapati* build temples, towns,

**The central idea clearly discernible in Indian classical art is that beauty is inherent in spirit, not in matter.**

seaports, tanks and wells, it is comparable to sin or murder.' As Coomaraswamy says, this was guild socialism in a non-competitive society.

Since building activity was entirely controlled by the architect and his subordinates being loyal and faithful to him, each detail was finalized before it was executed by an artist, craftsman or sculptor and nothing was ever left to the creative impulses of any single individual. The artist was not an isolated institution; in the social hierarchy, he belonged to the general class of artisans engaged in various crafts. He was obliged to apply the immutable principles of art codified in the canons. The *Arthashastra* refers to the various types of artisans engaged in building activity, their remuneration and State protection and other related information. It is interesting to note that not only sculptors but even artists



**MUSIC AND DANCE**  
Dancer, Vishvanatha Temple,  
Khajuraho.



**LOVE OF NATURE**  
Pushpavachaya, a lady  
gathering flowers. Kushana,  
2nd Century A.D.

engaged in other art activities, contributed to sculptural art. There is an interesting inscription on the eastern gateway of the Sanchi *stupa* which mentions that the magnificent carving on these *toranas* is the work of the ivory carvers of Vidisha.

There was total involvement of all sections of society in art and building activity. Artisans came in contact with patrons who would finance artistic ventures individually and collectively. Thus art activity was not the preserve of the royal and noble classes alone. Inscriptions from different places, like Bharhut, Sanchi, Mathura and other places, offer evidence regarding donors, their ranks, social status and the regions they came from, as also their part in making either the whole monument or a specific part. This indicates how people competed with each other for merit in participating in the construction of a monument.

This interest in art activity is manifested in sculptural themes as well. Portraits of donors – couples or individuals adorn various edifices. The daily routine of villagers, the luxurious life of the nobility and the wealth and magnificence of merchant princes are often sculpted.

Both Bharhut and Sanchi represent a phase of Indian religious evolution in which the widespread folk-cult of the *yakshas* and *yakshis*, the tutelary gods and goddesses of forest and village life, of trees and serpents and fertility were included in the ambit of art and played a supportive role to the main religious theme. Thus, the earliest impulses of Indian art are purely 'colloquial' (if one may be permitted to use that term) in nature.

The emphasis subsequently and gradually shifted from 'colloquial' to 'literary' themes such as the *Jataka Tales*. These tales were immensely popular as is evident from the sculptures at Sanchi, Bharhut and elsewhere. In the centuries that followed, literature dealing with both the spiritual and the secular, provided themes for some magnificent sculptural embellishments. The secular aspect of life was dominated by *sringara*, the erotic sentiment,

glorified equally by classical writers and sculptors.

'It is very difficult to understand the rules of painting without a knowledge of dancing,' quotes Stella Kramrisch from the *Vishnudharmottara*, in her foreword to C. Sivaramamurti's *Chitrasutra of Vishnudharmottara* showing the interrelatedness of all forms of art. Nature and human sentiments also had a role to play in the creation of art. The seasonal changes of the Indian landscape, poetically rendered by Kalidasa in his *Ritusamhara* are accompanied by melodies of the procession of seasons: spring, summer, rains, autumn and winter. The flowering *ashoka*, *champak* and *kadamba* as also the fruit-laden mango trees lend ambience to the *yakshis*, *vrikshakas*, *salabhanjikas* and *apsaras* in sculpture. Spring, *vasanta*, was a favourite season of Sanskrit poets. The relationship between nature, music and the sentiment of love, eloquently illustrated in the *Gitagovinda*, where the lyrics were set to the *Raga Vasanta* heighten the playfulness of Radha and Krishna. This aspect of Indian art is highlighted by Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee:

'The integration of the values of nature, metaphysics and concrete experience is profounder and more poignant than seen anywhere in the world's arts. The nuances of human love, the modes of melody and the elements of the landscape, all become perfectly fused in a stable feeling and attitude in which the distinction between the self and the rest of the universe, between man and nature, is completely abolished.'

The inter-relationship between sculpture and the performing arts is amply seen in the Chola sculptures. Postures of dance are evident in the contours of the limbs. The *gopuras* of Chidambaram temple are rich and valuable not only from the aesthetic point of view but also as an effective commentary on dance modes, *angaharas*, described in Bharata's *Natyashastra*. This was possible because the architect possessed the required skills in the performing arts.

The rulers of ancient and medieval

India were not only great patrons of building activity and literature but some of them were also experts in various forms of art and architecture. Raja Bhoja, the eleventh-century Paramara ruler of Dhar wrote two outstanding treatises, the *Samaranganasutradhara* and the *Yuktikalpataru*, on this subject. In the twelfth century, the Chalukya king Bhulokamalla Somesvara wrote the *Manasollasa*, a remarkable work on the polity, art and culture of the period. There were many rulers who contributed substantially towards the literary arts, too many to name here. This artistic flowering was eminently suitable for creative activities such as painting and sculpture.

The term 'classical' denotes the best or the most enduring and balanced examples of its kind in any field or period. In the western tradition, the term 'classical' usually suggests a line of descent from the art of Greece or Rome, or an adherence to the art canons of that period. In the Indian context, the Gupta tradition of art assumes the same importance. The canons of art of the Gupta period were clearly based on idealism as also realism or naturalism which meant an artistic reproduction which was perfect, objective and accurate. Over centuries, this ideal was progressively influenced by the fantasies of Sanskrit poets and their ideal of the feminine form which overrode earthly, realistic considerations. Though the classical form crystallized during the Gupta period, it continued to evolve in its expression, reaching its artistic zenith in the art of the Chandela and Orissan schools.

Indian sculpture of the classical period embodies the story of its people, their myths, beliefs and aspirations, emotions, dress and the type of environment they sought to create for themselves. There is one strong and common factor manifest in all these aspects – the sentiment of love. ❧

*Illustrations: From Living Sculpture by the same author. This book is reviewed in our Book Review section.*





# KATHAKALI

## KERALA'S CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD ART

R. INDUSEKHAR

**T**o write on a multi-splendoured, multi-faceted art form like Kathakali, in this brief article is no easy task. I do not know where to begin or how to begin because the field is so vast and so varied in its manifestations.

Kathakali, in the form as it exists today, has a history of over 350 years. Evolved from the ancient theatre and dance forms like Kutiyattam, Krishnanattam and Ramanattam of Kerala, as well as its folk forms, Kathakali has become a highly sophisticated and scientifically developed art form with established rules, traditions and conventions. Great *attakathas* (theories of acting and stage presentations), written on palm leaf manuscripts appeared from time to time. It is believed that there are about three hundred *attakathas*, but only about two hundred of them have been printed.

Mahakavi Vallathol, one of Kerala's most eloquent poets, was singularly responsible, earlier in the century, in taking the art out of the confines of temples and the houses of rich janmis, the landed gentry. He established 'Kalamandalam' in Cheruthuruthy, the well known school for the sustenance of the art forms of Kerala. The art of Kathakali started its triumphant march not only to many parts of India but all over the world.

Kathakali's debt to Kutiyattam has perhaps resulted in the use of more Sanskrit in its literature than lay viewers would like. However, in later works more Malayalam came to be used. A fine blending of Sanskrit and Malayalam is used in the famous *Nala Charitam*.

Kathakali is a 'demanding' art. Since it is looked upon with the greatest reverence, mediocrity in the actors is not tolerated. Years of intensive physical and mental training make the actors' endurance level amazingly high and the faculties razor sharp.

The grandeur of Kathakali will tolerate nothing so mundanely real as artificial stage props or settings. Once the actor makes his grand entry, a



Mahakavi Vallathol.

***The grandeur of Kathakali will tolerate nothing so mundanely real as artificial stage props or settings. Once the actor makes his grand entry, a world is created.....any world that he wants.***

world is created.....any world that he wants.

Having given this short introduction let me get to the particular subject of this piece which is, why I believe that Kathakali is a composite art form. Why is it composite? Because it combines:

1. DANCE that is powerful yet graceful.

2. DRAMA which touches a wide spectrum of life and situations with compelling realism.

3. CHARACTERS of epic proportions, larger than life yet human.

4. ACTING to a degree of perfection, perhaps, unsurpassed by any other world art.

5. ORCHESTRA

Let me talk about each aspect very briefly.

### DANCE

The element of pure dance with complicated but artistic footwork and hand movements is an important part of Kathakali. It is an art in which *abhinaya* (acting) is closely linked to the rhythmic patterns woven by the accompanying percussion instruments, setting the audience for the aesthetic experience or *bhava*. The speciality of the dance element in Kathakali lies in what are termed *kalasams* which could be described as 'dance punctuations'. These *kalasams* are based on specific *talas* or patterns of rhythms strung within a *pada* which is the literature of the performance. Let me quote the lines of a typical *pada*. This particular one is from *Ravana Vijayam*. I have chosen it for its poetic beauty and its potential for protracted and sophisticated acting. Ravana on seeing Sita, overcome with lust and longing, rhapsodises:

*In this night made glorious by the effulgence of the full moon, who art thou, so beautiful, walking alone? Although you have covered yourself with blue silk, I can see through its transparency, your beautiful body like the brilliance of a golden twig lying submerged in the blue waters of the Kalindi River.*

## DRAMA

We must remember that each day's performance covers a full play or the full delineation of a complete episode from the *Puranas* with a clear beginning, a denouement and a conclusion with a well-knit plot keeping the situations and characters linked by a dramatic chord. It is quite unlike the other dance forms such as Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam or Kuchipudi where snatches or bits from various episodes and stories are taken up for presentation.

In Kathakali, there are many situations charged with dramatic power with situations which remind us of some of the most powerful scenes in Shakespeare's plays. Macbeth, having perpetrated crime after crime as a helpless victim of circumstances, persuasive proddings of supernatural beings, his wife and spurred by his own 'vaulting ambition', finds at last that nemesis has overtaken him with relentless fury. He cries with the anguish of realisation:

*Tomorrow and tomorrow and  
tomorrow*

*Creeps in this petty pace from  
day to day*

*To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted  
fools*

*The way to dusty death .....  
Life is a tale*

*Told by an idiot, full of sound and  
fury signifying nothing.*

Or, imagine that scene where flower-like Desdemona with a skin smoother than 'monumental alabaster' is strangled to death by the mighty Moor Othello, although he realises with uncontrollable grief that once that light is put out he would not know what 'Promethean heat' can 'that light relume'. Or again, watch mighty Mark Antony, the triple pillar of the world transformed into a 'strumpet's fool' made such by the intoxicating Cleopatra, saying 'Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch of the rang'd empire fall ... Kingdoms are clay'. Look at the powerful scene in Marlowe's *Faustus*, where the latter's soul is being dragged to hell by Mephistopheles for eternal suffering

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after twenty four years of unadulterated bliss and joy which passes off like a fleeting dream.

What I am referring to here is that there are scenes of similar dramatic power and punch in Kathakali without drawing identical parallels of tragic situations.

King Nala, a noble person, a good king and a loving husband has fallen prey to the malicious machinations of Kali (Satan) and is mentally driven to leave Damayanti in the thick of the forest and disappear. The scene grips with pathos. The echo of a resemblance between the strangling of Desdemona and the renunciation of Damayanti is unmistakable — particularly in the manner in which the climax has been worked up. Similar in power is the scene where King Rugmangada is torn between his vow to observe Ekadasi and the trap that he has fallen into by having to behead his son to fulfill his vow. The storm that passes through his mind drives him to a point of spiritual breakdown. The scene in *Vichinnabhishekam* where Kaikeyi mercilessly pins Dasharatha to his vow and demands the banishment of Rama into the forest for fourteen years and the coronation of her son Bharata has all the force and compelling power of a *Tempest*. The tragic scene where Harischandra is torn between his feelings and emotions as the plaything of cruel destiny echoes Greek or Shakespearean tragedy.

I do not think that a more poignant, pointed and pathetic scene has been conceived in any drama than what we get in *Karna Sapatnam*. The mother pleads with repentance and appeals to her son for help. But the son, Karna,



*Macbeth, Royal National Theatre, Alan Howard.*

coming to know from her about his mysterious birth and the wicked manner in which she abandoned him soon after birth, chides her and rejects her request. The dialogue between Kunti, the helpless mother and Karna, the loving yet angry son, provides drama in its most sublime form.

Scenes of *sringara* and passionate romance provide for great dramatic poignancy. The *padas* brim with literary conceits, fanciful similes and metaphors, all grist for theatrical *abhinaya*.

Obviously, all drama deals with life in its diverse manifestations. In dramatic presentation, the element of imagination or *manodharma* may give it a touch of exaggeration or accentuation, amply evident in Kathakali. But, unlike most dramatic presentation, it does not stop at the level of either mere entertainment or existential grapplings. It teaches, offers solutions and achieves something more than the catharsis associated with Greek or Shakespearean tragedies. Besides its substantive value, is also dramatic-dance set to rhythmic patterns and musical literature making it a total if stylised theatre art.

In its out-of-the-world dress, characteristic make up and exposition of thought through the *mudra* without

the help of the spoken word, Kathakali stands quite different from contemporary drama. The combination of the 'unreal' and the 'real', only adds to its strange dramatic appeal.

## CHARACTERS

Characters in Kathakali (particularly the heroes) are of epic proportions not only because they have been culled out of the epics but because they have a certain grandeur, a certain individuality, a certain stature. They are not cheap tin-pot heroes. Some have a tragic flaw (as with Shakespearean tragic heroes) such as arrogance, a vaulting ego, thirst for revenge, burning hatred etc. Characters are rarely flat, making them very much in the image of Man. They have, however, their own outstanding personalities. Kichaka, who was slain by Bhima was supposed to have the strength of ten thousand elephants. Even Ravana has a special stature and dignity though *asuric* (demoniac) in temperament. His *bhakti* has an imperious colouring, an arrogance.

Nala, a kind and benevolent king passing through a series of trials and sufferings is one of the most unforgettable characters in Kathakali literature. Karna too, as conceived in the *Mahabharata* and as portrayed in the *Karna Sapatham attakatha* stands out as a man of valour, as a man capable of love, steadfast in his principles and convictions. Even his mother's plaintive pleadings cannot swerve him from the path of loyalty and devotion to Duryodhana. Even when he chides his mother he elicits sympathy from us. That is the beauty of his character.

He tells Kunti:

*How dare you utter words which are like daggers to my ear?*

*The fact that you are a woman is what protects you from death (at my hands)... Do you realise?*

Among the female characters, Sita, Panchali and Damayanti stand supreme. They have not been conceived as just beautiful, docile characters but invested with fortitude, self-confidence and determination as essential attributes



*Nala and Damayanti.*

of womanliness. In the scene where Krishna proceeds on his mission of mediating between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, Panchali in a firm and uncompromising tone, reminds Him of her vow that she would not tie her hair without the blood of Dushasana smeared on it. She has perforce to fulfil that vow.

A question often asked is why are the characters in Kathakali larger than

***Kathakali, in general, upholds the moral order and this order is housed in its dramatic heroes and heroines who must perforce be magnificent and complete in the embodiment of both good and evil.***

lifesize. Drawn from India's great epics, these characters are of 'epic proportions' men and women larger than life, endowed with a certain out-of-the-world grandeur set in situations of equal grandeur and magnitude. Often these characters play out their roles in constructs that are 'epically' dramatic. Kathakali, in general, upholds the moral order and this order is housed in its dramatic heroes and heroines who must perforce be magnificent and complete in the embodiment of both good and evil. Not only that, even the violence portrayed in Kathakali is not an end in itself but

a means to a much larger whole such as moksha. Narasimha slaying Hiranyakashipu, Bhima choking Kichaka, Raudra Bhima tearing apart Dushasana's entrails, the thunderous fight between Bhima and Hidimba and the disfigurement of Nakathunni are all 'great' battles between good and evil and must be portrayed by 'great' (and larger than life) characters. However, though the art form is highly stylised, it deals with basic human emotions and situations.

## ABHINAYA

Abhinaya is the art of presentation of ideas, thoughts and emotions through suggestive facial expression and a gamut of meaningful 'mudras'. This is the real life and soul of Kathakali. Abhinaya has four different parts and I shall mention them briefly for reasons of space:

(a) **Aharyam:** This covers the costumes and make-up which, like the rest of the art, is sophisticated and meaningful. It is a total make-up and not the wearing of masks as some people assume. A mask, which is dead material, cannot reveal or reflect any facial expressions. Each artiste's facial make-up, done by lamplight is by itself a work of art.

The facial make-up is not all the same for all characters. The make-up is linked to the type of character.

1. *Pacha* or Green for noble and



dignified characters, benevolent kings etc. Dharamaputra and other Pandavas, Nala, Karna, Rugmangada, Krishna.

2. *Kathi* for kings and others of that level who are not good or noble but are boastful, bumptious, unrelenting and haughty like Ravana, Hiranyakasipu, Kamsa, Duryodhana etc.

3. *Thadi*. There are different types, but red is the most important — men with physical prowess, downright ruthless, rash and wicked like Jarasandha Baka, Dushasana, Hidimba etc. Black *thadi* for *kattalan* (hunter) and characters of that type.

4. *Minuku* for female characters; soft and attractive; with glittering jewellery, red lips beautifully painted eye lashes. But *kari* (or jet black) for demonesses like Surpanakha, Poothana

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Ravana.

and Nakrathunni.

The headgear is highly ornate and the lower torso is covered by a broad and expansive skirt. The total appearance is thus very large and awesome.

#### b) Vachikam

This means the unfurling of the story from beginning to end by singing the *shlokas* and *padas* composed by the author.

#### c) Angika

This is the entire gamut of *mudras* which constitutes communication without the spoken word.

#### d) Satvika

This is the expression of various thoughts, emotions and feelings mainly through the eyes, facial muscles and lips. In Kathakali this is developed to an extent rarely seen in other art forms. A consummate artiste can produce the effect of height, distance and depth merely with his eyes.

Some years ago I happened to see Othello in London. The strangling scene of Desdemona lasted just a few minutes. I thought then, that in the hands of a Kathakali artiste one could have seen the slow delineation of Othello 'that loved not wisely but too well, of one not easily jealous, but being wrought perplexed in the extreme' and the helplessness of Desdemona.

#### ORCHESTRA

This constitutes the percussion instruments and vocalists. The former are alternately gentle and cajoling and loud and deafening.

A traditional Kathakali show which literally means 'playing out a story' goes on from dawn to dusk. It is a poem by itself. First the *keli* by the percussion ensemble announcing the programme, then the huge lamp with its tall flame, the invocatory *shlokas*, the temple *gopuram* or tower in the



Mario del Monaco and Raina Kabaiwanska as Othello and Desdemona in the death scene. *Othello*, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

background, the bare bodied men beating on the drums with increasing passion, all transform both time and space from the mundane to the extraordinary. These images together are the harbingers of this spirituo-dramatic art form. The conflict between *dharma* and *adharma*, good and evil, the vindication of *dharma*, the long and thorny path to salvation, relentless poetic justice and nemesis, vicious temptations that the flesh is heir to, the glory of *bhakti* to God and *guru*, these are Kathakali's thematic ingredients. No wonder then that it leaves you pondering the inscrutable. ❧

Photos: Sangeet Natak Akademi.

**R**Indusekhar began his career as a Sub-Editor in the British Ministry of Information and retired as a senior shipping executive. His deep personal interest in the language and culture of Kerala led him to research on a number of subjects in these areas. He has contributed articles to several leading journals and newspapers. He lives in Kochi.

## Some Hand Mudras in Kathakali



**Pathaka Mudra**

(As in an elephant or lion engaged in mortal combat)



**Soochimukha**

(As in the brave Lakshmana, embodiment of spiritual strength)



**Sarpashishir**

(As in a python, engorging animals with its stupendous jaws)



**Mukul**

(As in monkey, symbolising Hanuman, the Monkey God)



**Katakamukha**

(As in valour and dexterity with weapons, portraying Ravana, the demon king of Lanka)

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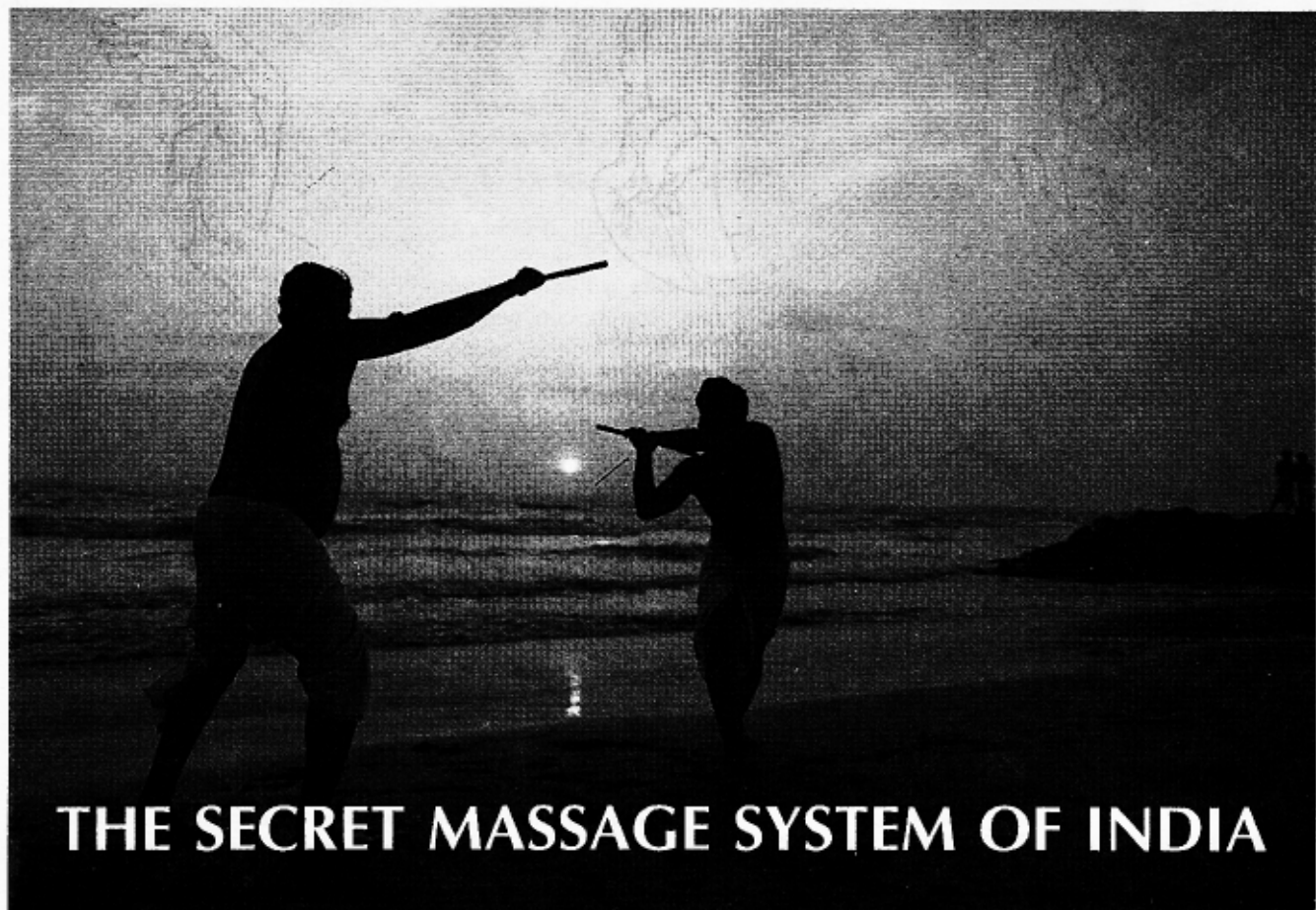


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# MARMA CHIKITSA



## THE SECRET MASSAGE SYSTEM OF INDIA

GAUTAM HARIDAS

*Physician, heal thyself! This is indeed a profound exhortation. The following article describes not only a different approach to medicine but to the doctor too. For, Marma Chikitsa, the ancient Indian massage system unites the patient and the healer. This massage system is closely linked with the martial art of Kerala, Kalaripayat and its classical dance form, Kathakali.*

**K**alaripayat, the martial art form of Kerala is said to be the mother of all the various martial art forms of South-East Asia. Though particularly deadly and potent as a fighting form, it is yet whole and preserving, with a peaceful side to it, and a spiritual essence that has survived till today in the interiors of the lush-green, sensuous and lyrically swaying southern state of Kerala. Nature was the primal inspiration for Kalaripayat having borrowed heavily from the fighting movements of wild animals. Gradually, this came to be perfected

and refined to such a degree that Kalaripayat assumed a far more subtle dimension. Weapon use was precise and they were wielded aesthetically, almost like in a dance. *Urumi*, the flexible sword belt is five to seven feet long and is unfurled at deadly speed. The *gada*, a heavy wooden mace, *kundam* or spear, *otta kol*, a short curved stick are some of the instruments of this highly evolved martial art. However, the most potent knowledge in Kalaripayat is the *marma adi*, (*marma* meaning nerve point), the secret art of attacking the vital nerve

points. All this was recorded in the greatest detail in palm-leaf manuscripts called the *Marma Sutras*. Thus Kalaripayat became a comprehensive package of martial artistry, the secret science of *marma adi*, tantric rituals, meditation and the Ayurvedic method of healing or Marma Chikitsa.

Marma Chikitsa, a highly specialized and arduous system of healing, is principally a manipulation of the life-energies through the nerve channels. It is a deep exchange of forces that proceeds from a spiritual practice. Without this primary aspect



Marma Chikitsa would simply be another effective massage system. But the profundity of ritual and self-consecration available through single-minded dedication renders it an abstract of highly evolved values. The healers model themselves on the ideal attributes of the Gods.

The goal of the treatment is healing of sickness and the restoration of health. But it is, in fact, the *manner* of healing, that is actually most important. A Kalari master, Mr. A.B George told me that a master healer does not even need to make contact with the subject, but can transmit the healing energy at will. This essence, this spiritual power, is the subtler aspect that distinguishes the Kalari art of healing from other oriental systems.

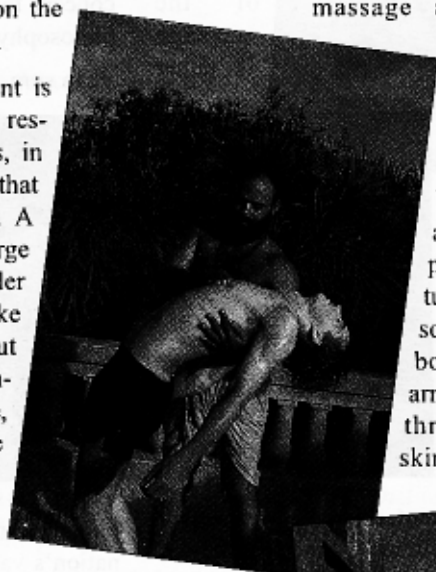
True to the meaning of the art which is its origin, Marma Chikitsa is performed with ritual as its heart. Francois Gautier, a French journalist living in Pondicherry, writes, 'The master first arranges his instruments, oils, body packs and herbs in one corner of the room and after having lit an oil lamp, performs a *puja* purifying the room. He then makes the patient perform several *asanas* in order to evaluate the problem and relax the patient's mind.' Further, Gautier writes that 'a good massage is a discipline, (in which) not only the body but also the mind has to participate in.' He stresses that the patient must demonstrate discipline of a certain calibre in order to withstand the more rigorous forms of massage, and derive their full benefit. Consequently, certain rules also apply: stress, overexposure to sunlight, sleep during the daytime, strenuous exercises, loud music and conversation, as well as alcohol and sexual activity, are to be shunned. Discipline, therefore, is of paramount importance and value. The massage is performed by women too, albeit there are fewer women practitioners. Women are said to be better masseurs than men. The goddess Parvati is the ideal of women practitioners — she is said to

have, during the mythological churning of the ocean, cured her consort Lord Shiva's ankle after it got sprained. The Kalari masters are trained in the Ayurvedic system of medicine. But their prestige lies in their expertise in

massage and bone-

setting.

There was a report in an article a few years back of how a master repaired a fracture that was so bad that the bone of the arm protruded through the skin.



The master simply took hold of the arm, and in one movement set the bone in its proper place. Forthwith, he

plucked a few leaves from a nearby tree, and applied its paste to the arm, followed by a light dressing. There was no need for a plaster, and in a few weeks time, the arm was as good as new. Similarly, the Kalari masters also prescribe home-made remedies for common ailments, which are far more

***Marma Chikitsa, a highly specialized and arduous system of healing, is principally a manipulation of the life-energies through the nerve channels.***

efficacious and trustworthy than allopathic drugs.

Pressurizing the 108 vital points of the body is the principal factor in Marma Chikitsa. Of these, 96 are held to be minor while 12 are considered particularly vulnerable. It is here that the Kalari masseur makes his mark. A

slow but strenuous massage of the entire body using varying pressure, sometimes with the hands and sometimes with the feet (holding on to a rope or bar above) is an important feature, somewhat akin to acupressure. In combat, these points are attacked so as to cause violent havoc in the nervous system.

Marma Chikitsa is a highly systematic and ordered form. But unless the spirit of individual effort on the part of the healer enters into the art and gives it its core of realization and unless the student takes care not to take the art for granted, the system would perish before the attractions of lucre and personal benefit. The very spirit of the art, its most needful and vital element, is dedication.

The difference underlying Marma Chikitsa and other forms of massage is a unique one. All massage systems mark fluid movements across the nerve channels. But in the Kalari mas-



sage, the nerve point itself is targeted. Its focus is on the principal points of the life-energy sheath. Energy originates here; it is what sustains the body. Being the most vulnerable points, they are activated by the flow of *prana* or subtle life-force that proceeds in a controlled flow from the healer's finger-tips. No bigger in surface area than a grain of uncooked rice, it requires very sensitive handling and thorough knowledge of the human anatomy. Marma Chikitsa is of particular value when the disease itself is due to an imbalance of the nervous energy in the various pressure points.

According to Sensei A.B. George, who also teaches Karate in Delhi, there are 4,448 nerve systems in the human body. These nerve systems represent the health of the human body. As long as they are not obstructed or caught up in weakness, the body remains energetic. The massage aims at revitalizing

these nerve systems not only to remove illness but to preserve health as well. The minutely mapped out nerve systems are responsible for maintaining the balance and center of gravity of the individual as well as other normal functions.

Particular oils are chosen for treatment of diseases. Diagnosis often begins, as in traditional Ayurveda, with measurement of the pulse. The aim is to remove not so much the illness as the cause of the illness.

True masters will pass on the secrets of the art only to those who are capable of rigorous discipline and intensive study upholding the purity of the tradition. However, even for those masters adept at Kalari, learning Marma Chikitsa is optional.

Today Marma Chikitsa stands apart as a most beneficial and comprehensive overview of a human being's health. But it is perishing slowly, for it is restricted by the very form that gives it its beauty. There is no reason for the average practitioner to explore it or discover new pathways, or to know the deeper aspects for himself or herself. True practitioners are the handful that know that *yogic* meditation, contemplative seriousness and energetic originality and enquiry are the prime motives of this ancient system. Yoga is the counterpart of Marma Chikitsa.

Kalaripayat is more than a martial art. Its practitioners are called 'dancers'. So it is not surprising that it has influenced classical dance forms. Consequently, the massage system has also found application in dance. I visited Sadanam Balakrishnan, a well-known Kathakali master. He believes that Kalaripayat is actually responsible for the evolution of some of the movements of Kathakali. And in addition, the Kalari massage has become an integral part of Kathakali training. It is used not so much for healing as for working and manipulating the body so



strenuous, making it difficult to endure. It carries on for the first three years of Kathakali

training without a break, irrespective of any difficulties or inconveniences including sickness. As such, with a little variation, Marma Chikitsa is being practised as a part of the tradition of dance in Kerala.

***The treatment itself consists of a vitalisation of the entire system, by a slow and expansive method.***

***The results are deep and ingrained, and slow to show themselves. Science must intervene and complement wisdom to keep this healing system alive, and to make it applicable to modern conditions.***

The treatment itself consists of a vitalisation of the entire system, and not merely one part, by a slow and expansive method. The results are deep and ingrained, and slow to show themselves. So, many have come to regard it as obsolete and crude. Science must intervene and complement wisdom to keep this healing system alive, and to make it applicable to modern conditions.

It is said that during the various stages of a person's life, he depends successively on his outer physical health, then internal strength followed

as to make it flexible and give it endurance. The character of the massage is rather

by the strength in the vital organs of the human body. At last, when the vital organs also begin to dissipate their energy, spiritual force alone remains to sustain the individual. According to Sensei George, it is the power of this concept that underlies and affirms the philosophy of Marma Chikitsa.

In sum, it could be said that Marma

Chikitsa is dying for want of values. By its very nature it is not easily accessible. So the most profound aspect of the art remains something of a mystery. Marma Chikitsa is a *sadhana*, an endeavour, a reli-

gion, an ethos and an indication of a nation's values. ☸

Photos: Francois Gautier

**G**autam Haridas, 23, volunteered briefly at THE EYE. He is deeply interested in alternative systems of healing and their relationships to the subtler aspects of human life. He writes poetry.

## MYTH MAGIC

Is there a corner of this ancient country that does not have its own little bit of folklore, its unique little myth? If you know of one, come share it with our readers. Just remember that the myth should have a local flavour and if it has some connection to something identifiable in the contemporary world, so much the better.

Type out your piece and rush it in to us at

### THE EYE

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## SALABHANJIKA - 2

### DOHADA

Trees are believed to have their own deep-rooted longings like the special longings (*dauhrida*) of pregnant women. A tree's longing (*dohada*) is merely a strong wish to enjoy in one form or the other the touch of a beautiful woman. The sheer joy of *dohada* ensures the flowering of the tree even out of season.

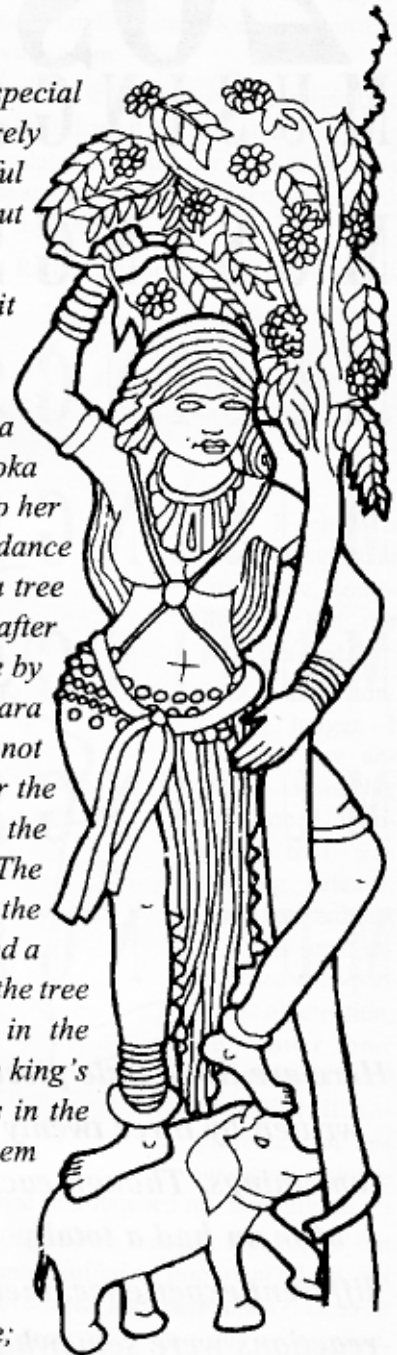
It is believed that a young woman can revitalize a tree and make it blossom by her touch. This belief is poetically expressed through the imagery of *dohada*, the longing of a pregnant woman which is fulfilled by her husband. The tree is conceived of as yearning for the company of a young woman. Different trees have different types of longings. The Ashoka tree desires a kick of a woman with jingling anklets and colour applied to her delicate feet. The tree particularly desires this 'kick' after the dance performance of a young and beautiful woman in front of it. The Bakula tree longs for a mouthful of wine from the delicate mouth of a young woman after which it flowers. The *dohada* of the Bakula tree is suggested in sculpture by showing a maiden under the tree with a cup of wine in her hand. The Kesara tree needs only a damsel's glance to fall upon it to flower though this is not much of a theme for sculptors. The Tilaka tree is also stated to yearn for the glance of a maiden. The Kuruvaka tree is fond of a woman's embrace; the Numeru tree blossoms by her music, the Karnikara by her dancing. The Priyangu creeper by her touch, the Mandara tree by her jokes, and the Champaka tree by her sweet smile. The relationship between a woman and a tree was believed to be reciprocal. Just as a woman could fertilize a tree, the tree could also impart fertility to her. A touching verse by Ratnakara in the *Subhasitavali* describes the modes of *dohada*; the women of the enemy king's harem tenderly taking leave of the Kuruvaka, Bakula and Ashoka trees in the gardens and reminding them respectively of their embrace, watering them with mouthfuls of wine and kicking them with the foot:

"O Kuruvaka tree! You are deprived of the pleasure of the sport in which my breasts rub against you;

O Bakula tree! Please do remember the sprinkling of mouthfuls of wine;

O ashoka tree! You will experience sorrow by the absence of kicks by my feet!"

So spoke the womenfolk of his enemies as they abandoned their city.



Culakokdevata  
Bharhut pillar relief,  
2nd century BC.

Prabhakar Begde

Illustration: *Living Sculpture* by the same author

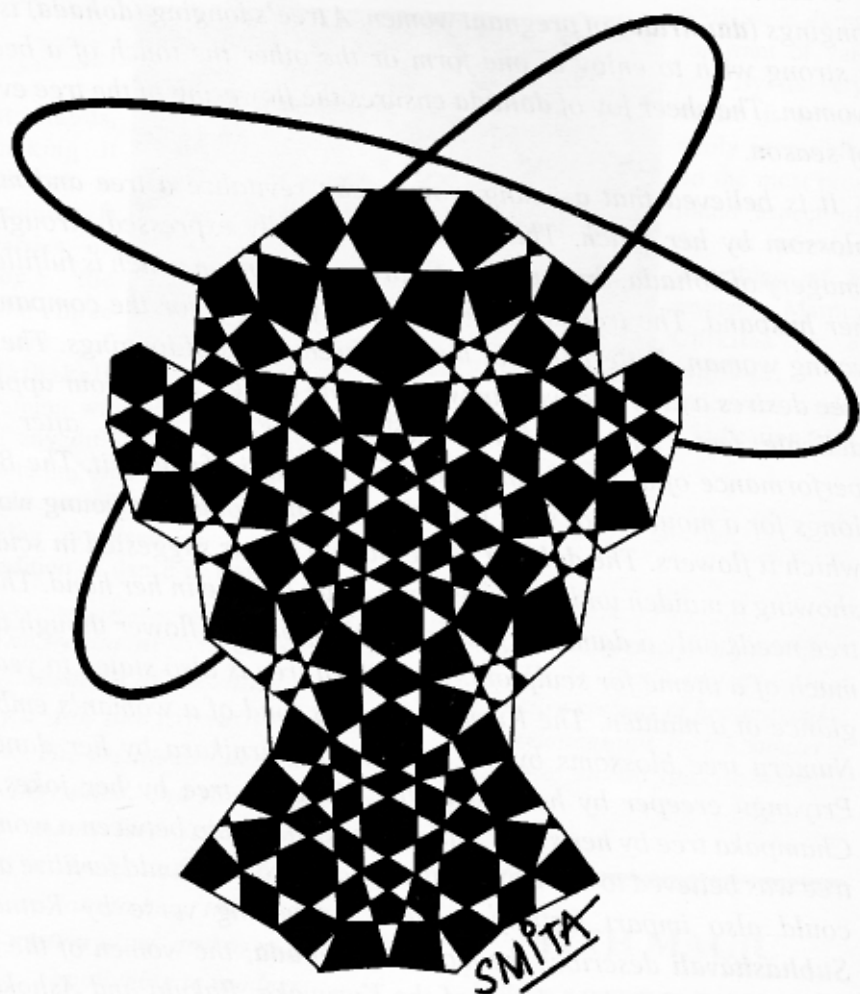


# 20s

MUSINGS  
MUSINGS  
MUSINGS  
MUSINGS  
MUSINGS  
MUSINGS  
MUSINGS

## A SLIDE SHOW ON GEOMETRY

OROON DAS



*Here are three little pieces  
written by three twenty  
somethings. Though each  
of them had a totally  
different experience, their  
reactions were somewhat  
similar, triggering off  
their minds towards some  
pretty unconventional  
ruminations. These  
twenties musings are  
simple yet provocative.*

Speaking of impact, there's no denying the fact that the slide-show by Mr. M.P. Ranjan helped me relate to geometry on a new plane, never mind if it made me feel only more inadequate. Soon, I was poring over reading lists, going through the library card-catalogue in a hurry and blowing air into my T-shirt near the stacks. I was disappointed not to have found anything that celebrated the wonders of geometry that many people from the past and the present seem to share. The spirit of the moment was such. We had just been told about how geometry had been

almost a subject of romance, something that had excited the imagination of evolved minds of the past and had led them to a virtual search of their horizons till someone ended up walking the entire circumference of the earth, and measuring it with an astounding degree of precision. From partially delirious memories of those two afternoons, came to my mind tales of adventure, courage and valour — of someone who discovered the relationship between the circumference and the radius of a circle by drawing to precision a polygon of ninety-six sides, of *jali* designs that were drawn on the

floor and almost magically 'thrown up' on to the ceiling, as Ranjan put it. Conscious constantly of the fact that it all happened at a time when these heroes of modern science had no market-sponsored technology to pamper them, I wondered why in my experience with geometry, I was stuck with the T-square, set square and other square situations as things that merely displaced weight from my wallet to my backpack.

Walking briskly that evening, back to my room, eager to put down on paper and find clarity in the several ideas that were floating in my head, I felt an urgency of purpose that was a first for me at NID. After weeks of unsurety and of soiling sheets and sheets of expensive paper with cold,

unfeeling effort, I felt I was finally at the periphery of an experience of some intensity and conviction. I was ready for the plunge.

Back in my room, staring at the clean sheet of paper under the familiar pool of yellow light, the slides began reeling before my eyes once again. The incidence of a micro image for every macro image was unbelievably consistent, till sank in an idea that perhaps there exists a conscious order in everything around me and perhaps I am part of one such system myself.

Other ideas followed. It became understandable how complex philosophical ideas could be 'seen' in geometric patterns and symbols, how social hierarchies could be similarly

mapped.

'Perhaps all this is not merely a random proliferation of mass and form but a vision of inconceivable complexity, beauty and intricacy.' And geometry is perhaps only one way of understanding the hidden links in this living cosm.

Now, it hardly seems surprising to be told that telephone cables are being insulated in a manner akin to the way the spider reinforces the tensile strength of its web.

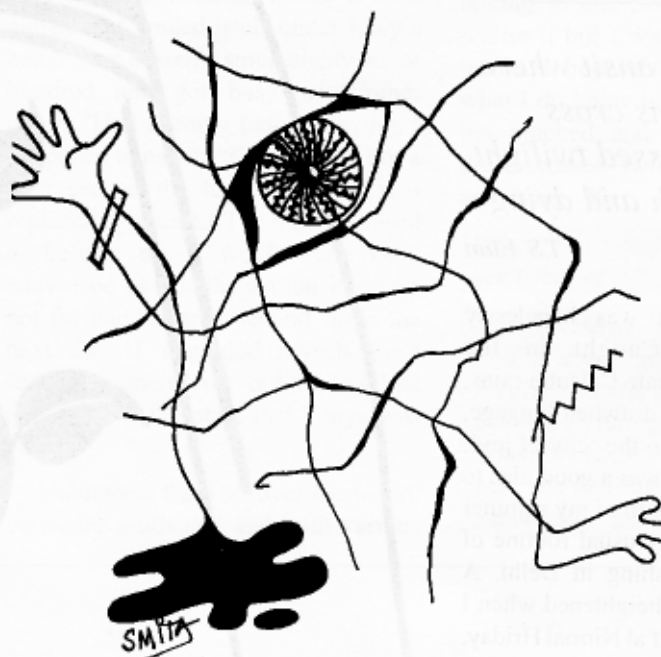
Rather it almost seems inevitable. ¶

*Oroon Das, 23, is a student at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad.*

## REFLECTIONS ON PAIN

GAUTAM HARIDAS

I was walking down a road one morning when I saw a terrifying scene: a little girl, no more than seven or eight years old, was crying out loud with grief and pathos writ large on her features. Her eyes seemed to be shouting; she had been struck by a passing vehicle. A deep gash ran down her right temple. Blood coloured her face a fearful red. Sympathetic and concerned passers-by were trying to soothe her and take her to the hospital nearby. But she paid them no heed, hugging the ground in hysteria, involved solely with herself. And partly out of fright, partly out of trauma, she was screaming as if she were uttering a heartbroken denial of the haplessness of her child-state. I saw, not a girl hurt and frightened, but the womanhood that already lived in her. The emerging visage of a nearly mature woman already made her wiser than her tender years. I realized it was innate, a part of her living soul. Subjected even to the frankest enquiry it would assert itself against the vicissitudes of the moment. It was revelatory of the instinct and strength of her woman nature. It was



the reaction of the motherhood in humanity.

The girl seemed to be rebelling against the law of insufficiency that stamped her existence. A conscious, sensitive mind sought justice and release from the indignity and tearing ignominy of pain. I was mentally petrified by the sight, and was reminded of myself and my own helplessness as a human being.

Pain I had always seen in human life as its inevitable concomitant aspect, but rarely had I perceived it with such suddenness and shocking acute-

ness. I sensed a hidden important truth here, something I had not fully grasped.

After pondering longer, I received my answer — it was her imprisoned innocence that was seeking release. And I realized that it is this same innocence that pervades all creation, no matter how stifled, obstructed or denied. It was the breath of this unassuming innocence that touched my sensibilities.

And then I asked myself, Is not human suffering important? Is it not irrevocable and permanent? Does it not deserve its own due redemption, and is it not a very powerful question?

Then again, what about those for whom pain is not only an incidental reality merely scarring them and holding them in bondage, but is in fact the very law of their living? What about those who live under the noon-time heat in utter darkness, oblivious to themselves and their condition? An entire lifetime is spent experiencing

pain, to the point where one's identity lies solely with tragedy. The harlot, the beggar, the crippled and disabled and those paralysed into inaction, all inert under the blow of nature — do they not deserve compassion? Does not the peculiar dignity of their suffering blend with their dulled, irresponsible brains to convey a striking appeal? Pain is a regular sight, but only those who endure it can assever that it begs a convincing answer.

The enormity of the situation was

borne home fully on me when I realized that pain is not only an objective and subjective phenomenon but a truth in its own right, more than a dark shadow or temporary eclipse hanging over mankind like some unlikely accident.

The final realization was that there is a consciousness in this cosmos which undergoes the law of pain, the stress of evil, the enigma of fear and the finality of death and destruction. It is a consciousness, ever-present, that

upholds the universe. And therefore any accomodation with pain and suffering, any true reconciliation, must come by a definite, conscious and independent struggle. In truth, if pain is real, a greater reality is the consciousness that suffers in ignorance. It is, indeed, we who suffer. ❧

**G**autam Haridas, 23,  
volunteered briefly  
at THE EYE.

## NIRMAL HRIDAY

ANANNYADASGUPTA

*In this brief transit where  
the dreams cross  
The dreamcrossed twilight  
between birth and dying*

T.S Eliot

**M**y train was hopelessly late. Caught in the passionate Calcutta rains, hugging my mostly drowned luggage, I gingerly waded into the 'city of joy'. I wasn't so sure if it was a good idea to spend one whole month of my summer vacations outside my usual routine of reading and languishing in Delhi. A feeling temporarily heightened when I first presented myself at Nirmal Hriday, Mother Teresa's home for the dying and destitute at Kalighat.

Faced with wards lined with rows of suffering human forms, my first feelings were of intense pity and an overwhelming inadequacy. What could I, a creature of health and happiness, presume to do, for those whose hurt frightened me? My homeward retreating steps were stayed by the chance sight of a tall and well built German volunteer bathing a very frail and sick old man. The gentleness of his manner, the palpable tenderness in his broken Bengali and the old man's trust in him gave me the courage to do





what I had gone there to do. I volunteered my services for a month.

Sister Dolores summed up the volunteer's work for me as 'being there and responding to the need of the moment.' The need of the moment could range from feeding and bathing patients to dressing wounds, washing dishes and doing the laundry. It took me a few days to get in tune with the needs and ways of Nirmal Hriday. As a jittery volunteer, my first task was to fold the dry laundry on the terrace. I graduated to cutting nails, dressing wounds, single handedly bathing invalid patients and even shaving heads, a knack that took me by surprise. It was a little tricky to arrive at the spirit of the work I was involved in. My first few days were plunged in gloom because I asked myself Job-like unanswerable questions. Why must people suffer, I asked, but unlike Job, God did not think me fit for a thunderous vision. Left to my devices, at Nirmal Hriday, I figured out that the sooner I accept suffering as a given, the sooner could I look it in the eye and help relieve some of it. I realised that sometimes it took no more than holding the hands of someone lingering painfully on the threshold of death.

Gradually bed numbers gave way to names. The generic 'patients' was replaced by individuals with special needs. I massaged Lucy's limbs, helped Milan with her exercises, sneaked in biscuits for Poornima, fed Kanan and

set aside at least ten minutes to listen to Chavi's incoherent recollections of a big house with sunlit windows. The gloom that I had associated with the place and the work lifted as soon as I stopped resisting the surprises and joys that exist even at Nirmal Hriday. Kiran, a particularly sullen inmate was known for her ill temper. She would often starve herself or throw angry abusive fits directed at the world in general. Only Tanya, the embodiment of politeness and patience, could feed Kiran and get away with it. One day Tanya did not come to work; we had the option to let Kiran starve which she liked doing or at least try to make her eat. Since I was the virtuous advocate of the latter option, I was left to try it out myself. It was herculean but I did it. Minus the orange juice which she spat and the banana, which a well aimed shot landed itself under Lucy's bed. I gave myself a smug eighty out of hundred and got busy with other things. That evening before leaving, I happened to pass by Kiran's bed. For a split second the habitual scowl was replaced by a smile. The others refused to believe me. I would have been convinced of a hallucination if it was not for another split second smile the next day. I upgraded myself to a smugger ninety five out of hundred and thanked my stars that Tanya was back.

Volunteers from all over the world, variously motivated and with various

levels of commitment come to work at Nirmal Hriday every year. I was fortunate to work with a group of very determined people. Laundry time and dishwashing time is the time when volunteers get to know each other. For some of us it was also the site for juvenile fun. Tired of out doing each other at scrubbing and rinsing we worked out a conspiracy to dunk people in the huge tubs where we washed the dishes. By the time I was leaving it was becoming a sort of ritual to dunk new volunteers. Some called it torture, we called it Baptism at Kalighat.

When I had 'waded' into Calcutta I couldn't have imagined that the one month that I had grudgingly spared would seem so short. On my last day at work Sister Dolores spent some time talking to me. She said that I didn't realise it but I was kind of grown up inside. I hope she is right. However what I do know is that I found among the plucked and the discarded, the dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying. ❧

*Illustrations: Smita Lohia, also in her twenties.*

*Anannya Dasgupta, 22, is doing her M.A. Finals in English Literature at Delhi University. She spent her one-month summer vacation at Nirmal Hriday with the help of the SPIC MACAY Scholarship Scheme.*



### *The Greatness of Simple*

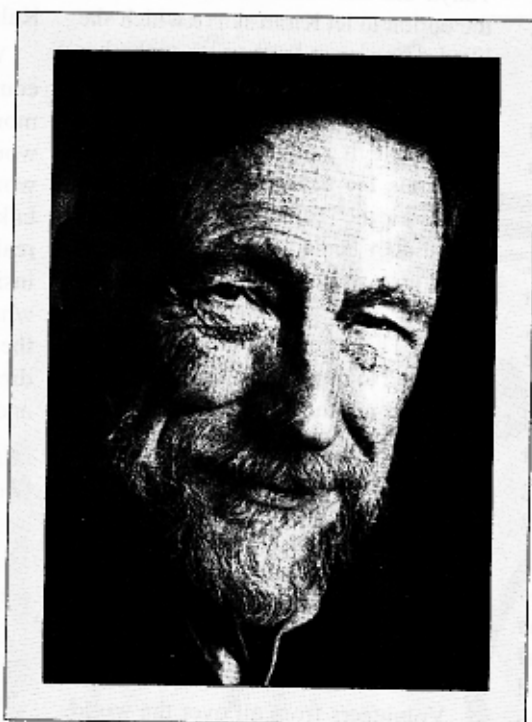
*Even though the beginning seems complex, the beginning of the beginning is simple. Find the simple beginning. The greatest arises from the simplest. At the centre of the largest is the smallest. Find the greatness of simple.*

*Be careful of pretense and adornment. When seeking the important, keep to the simple. Great is never complicated. Trust the simple. Accord and harmony arise from it. Greatest is always found in least.*

# A Place in Space

## Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds

GARY SNYDER



RAKU MAYERS

*'The ancient Buddhist precept, "cause the least possible harm" and the implicit ecological call to "let nature flourish" join in a reverence for human life and then go beyond that to include the rest of civilisation. These essays are Buddhist, poetic and environmental calls to complex moral thought and action..... Art, beauty and craft have always drawn on the self-organising "wild" side of language and the mind'.*

### **The Author**

*'Snyder's is a wise voice crying out on behalf of the wilderness with an authority and eloquence that's not been heard in our literature since Thoreau.'*

### **San Francisco Chronicle**

*The two essays that follow are fine examples of Snyder's eco-literature.*

# Smokey the Bear Sutra

Once in the Jurassic, about 150 million years ago, the Great Sun Buddha in this corner of the Infinite Void gave a great Discourse to all the assembled elements and energies: to the standing beings, the walking beings, the flying beings, and the sitting beings – even the grasses, to the number of thirteen billion, each one born from a seed – assembled there: a Discourse concerning Enlightenment on the Planet Earth.

"In some future time, there will be a continent called America. It will have great centers of power such as Pyramid Lake, Walden Pond, Mount Rainier, Big Sur, the Everglades, and so forth, and powerful nerves and channels such as the Columbia River, Mississippi River, and Grand Canyon. The human race in that era will get into troubles all over its head and practically wreck everything in spite of its own strong intelligent Buddha-nature.

"The twisting strata of the great mountains and the pulsings of great volcanoes are my love burning deep in the earth. My obstinate compassion is schist and basalt and granite, to be mountains, to bring down the rain. In that future American Era I shall enter a new form, to cure the world of loveless knowledge that seeks with blind hunger, and mindless rage eating food that will not fill it."

And he showed himself in his true



form of SMOKEY THE BEAR.

A handsome smokey-colored brown bear standing on his hind legs, showing that he is aroused and watchful.

Bearing in his right paw the shovel that digs to the truth beneath appearances, cuts the roots of useless attachments, and flings damp sand on the fires of greed and war;

His left paw in the *mudra* of comradely display – indicating that all creatures have the full right to live to their limits and that deer, rabbits, chipmunks, snakes, dandelions, and lizards all grow in the realm of the *dharma*;

Wearing the blue work overalls symbolic of slaves and laborers, the

countless people oppressed by a civilization that claims to save but only destroys;

Wearing the broad-brimmed hat of the West, symbolic of the forces that guard the wilderness, which is the *natural* state of the *dharma* and the true path of beings on earth – all true paths lead through mountains.

With a halo of smoke and flame behind, the forest fires of the *kali yuga*, fires caused by the stupidity of those who think things can be gained and lost whereas in truth all is contained vast and free in the Blue Sky and Green earth of One Mind;

Round-bellied to show his kind nature and that the great Earth has food enough for everyone who loves

her and trusts her;

Trampling underfoot wasteful freeways and needless suburbs; smashing the worms of capitalism and totalitarianism;

Indicating the task: his followers, becoming free of cars, houses, canned food, universities, and shoes, master the three mysteries of their own body, speech, and mind, and fearlessly chop down the rotten trees and prune out the sick limbs of this country America and then burn the leftover trash.

Wrathful but Calm, austere but comic, Smokey the bear will illuminate those who would help him; but for those who would hinder or slander him, HE WILL PUT THEM OUT.



Thus his great *mantra*:  
*Namah samanta vajranam chanda*  
*maharoshana*  
*Sphataya hum traka ham mam*  
*I dedicate myself to the Universal*  
*Diamond*  
*be this raging fury destroyed*

And he will protect those who love woods and rivers, gods and animals, hoboes and madmen, prisoners and sick people, musicians, playful women, and hopeful children;

And if anyone is threatened by advertising, air pollution, or the police,

they should chant SMOKEY THE BEAR'S WAR SPELL:

*Drown their butts*  
*Crush their butts*  
*Drown their butts*  
*Crush their butts*

And Smokey the Bear will surely appear to put the enemy out with his *vajra* shovel.

Now those who recite this *sutra* and then try to put it in practice will accumulate merit as countless as the sands of Arizona and Nevada,

Will help save the planet earth from

total oil slick,

Will enter the age of harmony of humans and nature,

Will win the tender love and caresses of men, women, and beasts,

Will always have ripe blackberries to eat and a sunny spot under a pine tree to sit at,

AND IN THE END WILL WIN HIGHEST PERFECT ENLIGHTENMENT.

Thus have we heard.

(May be reproduced free forever)

## Regarding 'Smokey the Bear Sutra'



It's hard not to have a certain amount of devotional feeling for the Large Brown Ones, even if you don't know much about

them. I met the Old Man in the fur coat a few times in the North Cascades — once in the central Sierra — and was suitably impressed. There are many stories told about humans marrying the Great Ones. I brought much of that lore together in my poem 'this poem is for B\_\_r,' which is part of *Myths and Texts*. The Circumpolar B\_\_r cult, we are told, is the surviving religious complex (stretching from Suomi to Utah via Siberia) of what may be the oldest religion on earth. Evidence in certain Austrian caves indicates that our Neanderthal ancestors were practicing a devotional ritual to the Big Fellow about seventy thousand years ago. In the light of meditation once it came to me that the Old One was no other than that Auspicious Being described in Buddhist texts as having taught in the unimaginably distant past, the one called 'The Ancient Buddha.'

So I came to realize the U.S. Forest Service's 'Smokey the B\_\_r' publicity campaign was the inevitable resurfacing of our ancient benefactor as guide and

teacher in the twentieth century, the agency not even knowing that it was serving as a vehicle for this magical re-emergence.

During my years in Japan I had kept an eye out for traces of ancient B\_\_r worship in folk religion and within Buddhism, and it came to me that Fudo Myoo, the patron of the Yamabushi (a Shinto-Buddhist society of Mountain *yogins*), whose name means the 'Immovable Wisdom King,' was possibly one of those traces. I cannot provide an academic proof for this assertion; it's an intuition based on Fudo's usual habitat — deep mountains. Fudo statues and paintings portray a wickedly squinting fellow with one fang down and one fang up, a braid hanging down one side of the head, a funny gleam in his eye, wreathed in rags, holding a *vajra* sword and a lariat, standing on rough rock and surrounded by flames. The statues are found by waterfalls and deep in the wildest mountains of Japan. He also lurks in caves. Like the Ainu's Kamui Kimun, Lord of the Inner Mountains — clearly a B\_\_r deity — Fudo has surpassing power, the capacity to quell all lesser violence. In the iconography he is seen as an aspect of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, or the consort of the beautiful Bodhisattva Tara, She Who Saves.

It might take this sort of Buddha to quell the fires of greed and war and to help us head off the biological holocaust that the twenty-first century may well prove to be. I had such thoughts in mind when I returned to Turtle Island (North America) in December of 1968 from a long stay in Japan. A copy of the San Francisco Chronicle announced the Sierra Club Wilderness conference of February 1969; it was to be the following day. I saw my chance, sat down, and the *sutra* seemed to write itself. It follows the structure of a Mahayana Buddhist *sutra* fairly faithfully. The power *mantra* of the Great Brown One is indeed the *mantra* of Fudo the Immovable.

I got it printed overnight. The next morning I stood in the lobby of the conference hotel in my old campaign hat and handed out the broadsides, saying, "Smokey the B\_\_r literature, sir." Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service officials politely took them. Forest beatniks and conservation fanatics read them with mad glints and giggles. The Underground News Service took it up, and it went to the *Berkeley Barb* and then all over the country. *The New Yorker* queried me about it, and when I told them it was both free and anonymous, they said they couldn't publish it. It soon had a life of its own, as intended. ☸



**W**e human beings of the developed societies have once more been expelled from a garden – the formal garden of Euro-American humanism and its assumptions of human superiority, priority, uniqueness, and dominance. We have been thrown back into that other garden with all the other animals and fungi and insects, where we can no longer be sure we are so privileged. The walls between 'nature' and 'culture' begin to crumble as we enter a post-human era. Darwinian insights force occidental people, often unwillingly, to acknowledge their literal kinship with critters.

Ecological science investigates the interconnections of organisms and their constant transactions with energy and matter. Human societies come into being along with the rest of nature. There is no name yet for a humanistic scholarship that embraces the nonhuman. I suggest (in a spirit of pagan play) we call it 'panhumanism.'

Environmental activists, ecological scientists, and panhumanists are still in the process of re-evaluating how to think about, how to create policy with,

nature. The professional resource managers of the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have been driven (partly by people of conscience within their own ranks) into rethinking their old utilitarian view of the vast lands in their charge. This is a time of lively confluence, as

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scientists, self-taught ecosystem experts from the communities, land management agency experts, and a new breed of ecologically aware loggers and ranchers (a few, but growing) are beginning to get together.

In the more rarefied world of ecological and social theory, the

confluence is rockier. Nature writing, environmental history, and ecological philosophy have become subjects of study in the humanities. There are, however, still a few otherwise humane historians and philosophers who unreflectingly assume that the natural world is primarily a building-supply yard for human projects. That is what the Occident has said and thought for a couple thousand years.

Right now there are two sets of ideas circling about each other. One group, which we could call the 'Savers,' places value on extensive preservation of wilderness areas and argues for the importance of the original condition of nature.

This view has been tied to the idea that the mature condition of an ecosystem is a stable and diverse state technically called 'climax'. The other position holds that nature is constantly changing, that human agency has altered things to the point that there is no 'natural condition' left, that there is no reason to value climax (or 'fitness') over any other succession phase, and that human beings are not only part of

nature but that they are also dominant over nature and should keep on using and changing it. They can be called the 'Users.' The Savers' view is attributed to the Sierra Club and other leading national organizations, to various 'radical environmentalists,' and to many environmental thinkers and writers. The Users' view, which has a few supporters in the biological sciences, has already become a favourite of the World Bank and those developers who are vexed by the problems associated with legislation that requires protection for creatures whose time and space are running out. It has been quickly seized on by the industry-sponsored pseudopopulist-flavored 'Wise Use' movement.

Different as they are, both groups reflect the instrumentalist view of nature that has long been a mainstay of occidental thought. The Savers' idea of freezing some parts of nature into an icon of 'pristine, uninhabited wilderness' is also to treat nature like a commodity, kept in a golden cage. Some preservationists have been insensitive to the plight of indigenous peoples whose home grounds were turned into protected wildlife preserves or parks, or to the plight of local workers and farmers who lose jobs as logging and grazing policies change.

The Users, in turn, are both pseudopopulist and multinational. On the local level they claim to speak for communities and workers (whose dilemma is real enough), but a little probing discloses industry funding. On the global scale their backers line up with huge forces of governments and corporations, with NAFTA and GATT, and raise the spectre of further destruction of local communities. Their

organizations are staffed by the sort of professionals whom Wendell Berry calls 'hired itinerant vandals.'

Post-modern theoreticians and critics have recently ventured into nature politics. Many of them have sided with the Users—they like to argue that nature is part of history, that human beings are part of nature, that there is little in the natural world that has not already been altered by human agency, that in any case, our idea of 'nature' is a projection of our social condition and that there is no sense in trying to preserve a theoretical wild. However, to say that the natural world

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is subject to continual change, that nature is shaped by history, or that our idea of reality is a self-serving illusion is not new. These positions still fail to come to grips with the question of how to deal with the pain and distress of real beings, plants and animals, as real as suffering humanity; and how to preserve natural variety. The need to protect worldwide biodiversity may be economically difficult and socially controversial, but there are strong

scientific and practical arguments in support of it, and it is for many of us a profound ethical issue.

Hominids have obviously had some effect on the natural world, going back to half a million or more years. So we can totally drop the use of the word 'pristine' in regard to nature as meaning 'untouched by human agency.' 'Pristine' should now be understood as meaning 'virtually' pristine. Almost any apparently untouched natural environment has, in fact, experienced some tiny degree of human impact. Historically there were huge pre-agricultural environments where the human impact, rather like deer or cougar activities, was normally almost invisible to any but a tracker's eye. The greatest single pre-agricultural human effect on wild nature, yet to be fully grasped, was the deliberate use of fire. In some cases human-caused fire seemed to mimic natural processes, as with deliberate use of fire by native Californians. Alvar Nunez 'Cabeza de Vaca,' in his early-sixteenth-century walk across what is now Texas and the Southwest, found well-worn trails everywhere. But the fact still remains that there were great numbers of species, vast grasslands, fertile wetlands, and extensive forests in mosaics of all different stages in the pre-industrial world. Barry Commoner has said that the greatest destruction of the world environment — by far — has taken place since 1950.

Furthermore, there is no 'original condition' that once altered can never be redeemed. Original nature can be understood in terms of the myth of the 'pool of Artemis' — the pool hidden in the forest that Artemis, goddess of wild things, visits to renew her virginity.







The wild has – nay, is – a kind of hip, renewable virginity.

We are still laying the groundwork for a 'culture of nature.' The critique of the Judeo-Christian-Cartesian view of nature (by which complex of views, all developed nations excuse themselves for their drastically destructive treatment of the landscape) is well under way. Some of us would hope to resume, re-evaluate, re-create, and bring into line with complex science that old view that holds the whole phenomenal world to be our own being: multi-centered, 'alive' in its own manner, and effortlessly self-organizing in its own chaotic way. Elements of this view are found in a wide range of ancient vernacular philosophies, and it turns up in a variety of more sophisticated but still tentative forms in recent thought. It offers a third way, not caught up in the dualisms of body and mind, spirit and matter, or culture and nature. It is a non-instrumentalist view that extends intrinsic value to the non-human natural world.

Scouting parties are now following a skein of old tracks, aiming to cross and explore beyond the occidental (and post-modern) divide. I am going to lay out the case history of one of these probes. It's a potentially new story for the North American identity. It has already been in the making for more than thirty years. I call it 'the rediscovery of Turtle Island.'



In January 1969 I attended a gathering of Native American activists in Southern California. Hundreds of people had come from all over the West. After sundown we went out to a gravelly wash that came down from

the desert mountains. Drums were set up, a fire started, and for most of the night we sang the pan-tribal songs called 'forty-nines.' The night conversations circled around the idea of a native-inspired

cultural and ecological renaissance for all of North America. I first heard this continent called 'Turtle Island' there by a man who said his work was to be a messenger. He had his dark brown long hair tied in a Navajo men's knot, and he wore dusty khakis. He said that Turtle Island was the term that the people were coming to, a new name to

*A lot of this followed on the heels of the back-to-the-land movement and the diaspora of longhairs and dropout graduate students to rural places in the early seventies. Although the counterculture has faded and blended in, its fundamental concerns remain a serious part of the dialogue.*

help us build the future of North America. I asked him whom or where it came from. He said, "There are many creation myths with Turtle, East Coast and West Coast. But also you can just hear it."

I had recently returned to the West Coast from a ten-year residence in Japan. It was instantly illuminating to hear this continent renamed 'Turtle Island.' The realignments that conversation suggested were rich and complex. I was reminded that the indigenous people here have a long history of subtle and effective ways of working with their

home grounds. They have had an exuberant variety of cultures and economies and some distinctive social forms (such as communal households) that were found throughout the hemisphere. They sometimes fought with each other, but usually with a deep sense of mutual respect. Within each of their various forms of religious life lay a powerful spiritual teaching on the matter of human and natural relationships, and for some individuals, a practice of self-realization that came with trying to see through non-human eyes. The landscape was intimately known, and the very idea of community and kinship embraced and included the huge populations of wild beings. Much of the truth of Native American history and culture has been obscured by the self-serving histories that were written on behalf of the conquerors, the present dominant society.

This gathering took place one year before the first Earth Day. As I re-entered American life during the spring of 1969, I saw the use of the term 'Turtle Island' spread through the fugitive Native American newsletters and other communications. I became aware that there was a notable groundswell of white people, too, who were seeing their life in the Western Hemisphere in a new way. Many whites figured that the best they could do on behalf of Turtle Island was to work for the environment, re-inhabit the urban or rural margins, learn the landscape, and give support to native Americans when asked. By 1970 I had moved with my family to the Sierra Nevada and was developing a forest homestead north of the South Yuba River. Many others entered the mountains and hills of the Pacific





slope with virtually identical intentions, from the San Diego backcountry north into British Columbia. They had begun the re-inhabitory move.

Through the early seventies I worked with my local forest community, but made regular trips to the cities, and was out on long swings around the country reading poems or leading workshops – many in urban areas. Our new sense of the Western Hemisphere permeated everything we did. So I called the book of poems I wrote from that period *Turtle Island* (New York: New Directions, 1974). The introduction says:

*Turtle Island – the old-new name for the continent, based on many creation myths of the people who have been living here for millennia, and re-applied by some of them to 'North America' in recent years. Also, an idea found worldwide, of the earth, or cosmos even, sustained by a great*

*turtle or serpent-of-eternity.*

*A name: that we may see ourselves more accurately on this continent of watersheds and life communities – plant zones, physiographic provinces, culture areas, following natural boundaries. The 'U.S.A.' and its states and counties are arbitrary and inaccurate impositions on what is really here.*

*The poems speak of place, and the energy pathways that sustain life. Each living being is a swirl in the flow, a formal turbulence, a 'song.' The land, the planet itself, is also a living being – at another pace. Anglos, black people, Chicanos, and others beached up on these shores, all share such views at the deepest levels of their old cultural traditions – African, Asian, or European. Hark again to those roots, to see our ancient solidarity, and then to the work of being together on Turtle Island.*

Following the publication of these poems, I began to hear back from a lot of people – many in Canada – who were remaking a North American life. Many other writers got into this sort of work each on his or her own – a brilliant and cranky bunch that included Jerry Rothenberg and his translation of native American song and story into powerful little poem events; Peter Blue Cloud with his evocation of coyote in a contemporary context; Dennis Tedlock, who offered a storyteller's representation of Zuni oral narrative in English; Ed Abbey, calling for a passionate commitment to the wild; Leslie Silko in her shivery novel *Ceremony*; Simon Ortiz in his early poems and stories – and many more.

A lot of this followed on the heels of the back-to-the-land movement and the diaspora of longhairs and dropout graduate students to rural places in the early seventies. There are thousands of people from those days still making a culture: being teachers, plumbers, chair and cabinet makers, contractors and carpenters, poets in the schools, auto mechanics, geographic information computer consultants, registered foresters, professional storytellers, wildlife workers, river guides, mountain guides, architects, or organic gardeners. Many have simultaneously mastered grass-roots politics and the intricacies of public lands policies. Such people can be found tucked away in the cities, too.

The first wave of writers mentioned left some strong legacies: Rothenberg, Tedlock, and Dell Hymes gave us the field of ethnopoetics (the basis for truly appreciating multicultural literature); Leslie Silko and Simon Ortiz opened the way for a distinguished and diverse body of new American Indian writing; Ed Abbey's eco-warrior spirit led toward the emergence of the radical environmental group Earth First!, which (in splitting) later generated the Wild Lands Project. Some of my own writings contributed to the inclusion of Buddhist ethics and lumber industry work life in the mix, and writers as different as Wes Jackson, Wendell Berry, and Gary Paul Nabhan opened the way for a serious discussion of

place, nature in place, and community. The Native American movement has become a serious player in the national debate, and the environmental movement has become (in some cases) big and controversial politics. Although the counterculture has faded and blended in, its fundamental concerns remain a serious part of the dialogue.

A key question is that of our ethical obligations to the non-human world. The very notion rattles the foundations of occidental thought. Native American religious beliefs, although not identical coast to coast, are overwhelmingly in support of a full and sensitive acknowledgment of the subjecthood – the intrinsic value – of nature. This in no way backs off from an unflinching awareness of the painful side of wild nature, of acknowledging how everything is being eaten alive. The twentieth-century syncretism of the 'Turtle Island view' gathers ideas from Buddhism and Taoism and from the lively details of worldwide animism and paganism. There is no imposition of ideas of progress or order on the natural world – Buddhism teaches impermanence, suffering, compassion, and wisdom. Buddhist teachings go on to say that the true source of compassion and ethical behavior is paradoxically none other than one's own realization of the insubstantial and ephemeral nature of everything. Much of animism and paganism celebrates the actual, with its inevitable pain and death, and affirms the beauty of the process. Add contemporary ecosystem theory and environmental history to this, and you get a sense of what's at work.

Conservation biology, deep ecology, and other new disciplines are given a community constituency and real grounding by the bio-regional movement. Bio-regionalism calls for commitment to this continent *place by place*, in terms of bio-geographical regions and watersheds. It calls us to see our country in terms of its landforms, plant life, weather patterns, and seasonal changes – its whole natural history before the net of political jurisdictions was cast over it. People are challenged to become 're-inhabitory' – that is, to become people

who are learning to live and think 'as if' they were totally engaged with their place for the long future. This doesn't mean some return to a primitive lifestyle or utopian provincialism; it simply implies an engagement with community and a search for the sustainable sophisticated mix of economic practices that would enable people to live regionally and yet learn from and contribute to a planetary society. (Some of the best bio-regional work is being done in cities, as people try to restore both human and ecological neighborhoods). Such people are,

***Mythopoetic play can be part of what jump-starts long-range social change. But what about the short term? There are some immediate outcomes worth mentioning: a new era of community interaction with public lands has begun. Some of the most vital environmental politics is being done by watershed or ecosystem-based groups.***



regardless of national or ethnic backgrounds, in the process of becoming something deeper than 'American (or Mexican or Canadian) citizens' – they are becoming natives of Turtle Island.

Now in the nineties, the term 'Turtle Island' continues, modestly, to extend its sway. There is a Turtle Island Office that moves around the country with its newsletter; it acts as a national information centre for the many bio-regional groups that every other year hold a 'Turtle Island Congress'. Participants come from Canada and Mexico as well as the United States. The use of the term is now standard in a number of Native American periodicals and circles. There is even a 'Turtle Island String Quartet' based in

San Francisco. In the winter of 1992, I practically convinced the director of the Centro de Estudios Norteamericanos at the Universidad de Alcalá in Madrid to change his department's name to 'Estudios de la Isla de Tortuga.' He much enjoyed the idea of the shift. We agreed: speak of the United States, and you are talking two centuries of basically English-speaking affairs; speak of 'America' and you invoke five centuries of Euro-American schemes in the Western Hemisphere; speak of 'Turtle Island' and a vast past, an open future, and all the life communities of plants, humans, and critters come into focus.



The Nisenan and Maidu, indigenous people who live on the east side of the Sacramento Valley and into the northern Sierra foothills, tell a creation story that goes something like this:

*Coyote and Earthmaker were blowing around in the swirl of things. Coyote finally had enough of this aimlessness and said, "Earthmaker, find us a world!"*

*Earthmaker tried to get out of it, tried to excuse himself, because he knew that a world can only mean trouble. But Coyote nagged him into trying. So leaning over the surface of the vast waters, Earthmaker called up Turtle. After a long time Turtle surfaced, and Earthmaker said, "Turtle, can you get me a bit of mud? Coyote wants a world."*

*A world," said Turtle. "Why bother? Oh, well." And down she dived. She went down and down and down, to the bottom of the sea. She took a great gob of mud, and started swimming toward the surface. As she spiraled and paddled upward, the streaming water washed the mud from the sides of her mouth, from the back of her mouth – and by the time she reached the surface (the trip took six years), nothing was left but one grain of dirt between the tips of her beak.*

*"That'll be enough!" said Earthmaker, taking it in his hands and giving it a pat like a tortilla. Suddenly Coyote and Earthmaker were standing on a piece of ground as big as a tarp.*



and they were standing on a flat wide plain of mud. The ocean was gone. They stood on the land.

And the Coyote began to want trees and plants, and scenery, and the story goes on to tell how Coyote imagined landscapes that then came forth, and how he started naming the animals and plants as they appeared. "I'll call you skunk because you look like skunk." And the landscapes Coyote imagined are there today.

My children grew up with this as their first creation story. When they later heard the Bible story, they said, "That's a lot like Coyote and Earthmaker." But the Nisenan story gave them their own immediate landscape, complete with details, and the characters were animals from their own world.

Mythopoetic play can be part of what jump-starts long-range social change. But what about the short term? There are some immediate outcomes worth mentioning: a new era of community interaction with public lands has begun. In California a new set of ecosystem-based government/community joint-management discussions are beginning to take place.

politics is being done by watershed or ecosystem-based groups. "Ecosystem management" by definition includes private land-owners in the mix. In my corner of the northern Sierra, we are practicing being a "human-inhabited wildlife corridor" — an area that functions as a biological connector — and are coming to certain agreed-on practices that will enhance wildlife survival even as dozens of households continue to live here. Such neighborhood agreements would be one key to preserving wildlife diversity in most Third World countries.

Ultimately we can all lay claim to the term native and the songs and dances, the beads and feathers, and the profound responsibilities, that go with it. We are all indigenous to this planet, this mosaic of wild gardens we are being called by nature and history to reinhabit in good spirit; part of that responsibility is to choose a place. To restore the land one must live and work in a place. To work in a place is to work with others. People who work together in a place become a community, and a community, in time, grows a culture. To work on behalf of the wild is to restore culture. ☸

Illustrations: Rustam Vania.  
Courtesy: *A Place in Space*,  
Counterpoint, Washington D.C.

Gary Snyder's is a deeply loved and respected name in environmental literature. His metaphysics of 'wilderness', his Buddhist perceptions of all nature and the quiet calm of the forest are deeply etched on his sixty six year old face. His childhood was spent working on his parents' farm. After graduating from Reed College, he studied Oriental Language at the UCLA, Berkeley. He was one of the founding members of the beat generation poets of the sixties. The next ten years he spent in Japan studying Zen Buddhism. He made a pilgrimage through India. Gary wrote fourteen volumes of poetry and prose including the Pulitzer Prize winning *Turtle Island*. He lives in the foothills of Sierra Nevada ('without television') and teaches English at the University of California, Davis.

## Tomorrow's Song

The USA slowly lost its mandate  
in the middle and later twentieth century  
it never gave the mountains and rivers,  
trees and animals,  
a vote.  
all the people turned away from it  
myths die; even continents are impermanent

Turtle Island returned.  
my friend broke open a dried coyote-scat  
removed a ground squirrel tooth  
pierced it, hung it  
from the gold ring  
in his ear.

We look to the future with pleasure  
we need no fossil fuel  
get power within  
grow strong on less.

Grasp the tools and move in rhythm side by side  
flash gleams of wit and silent knowledge  
eye to eye  
sit still like cats or snakes or stones  
as whole and holding as  
the blue black sky.  
gentle and innocent as wolves  
as tricky as a prince.

At work and in our place:

in the service  
of the wilderness  
of life  
of death  
of the Mother's breasts!

Gary Snyder

# GROWTHMANIA

MALCOLM BALDWIN

*It seems we are becoming obsessed. If I casually tune in to any news or current affairs programme it's not long before 'moneyspeak' assaults my senses. Only last week I heard the word 'market' mentioned eight times in five minutes — on a programme about hospitals!*



Phrases like consumer confidence, steady growth, competitive marketplace, business enterprise, interest rates and the like have come to dominate the airwaves. Most telling of all, these activities always seem to happen 'out there'. Politicians and businessmen predictably refer to the 'competitive market place out there' as if to distance themselves from the unpleasant truth that the free market economy may not be the best of all possible worlds. Sadly we all seem trapped by this ugly language of insatiable greed and expanding markets. Worse still it is those with power and wealth who stand closest to the microphone constantly extolling its virtues. So maybe it's wise to reflect for a moment on the notion of infinite economic growth in a finite world.

Any parent hopes that their offspring will flourish into mature healthy adults, but if they continue to grow much beyond the age of eighteen it might be the cause of grave concern. However in the dubious world of economic theory, biological limits are given little credence. It would be a brave politician or corporation president who would set annual growth targets at anything less than 3%. Conventional wisdom has it that accelerating technological advancement creates unemployment to the tune of 2% per annum. So in order to maintain full employment and have a margin of profitability to re-invest in the economy, a 3% growth target seems wholly reasonable, but like so much in economic theory, it fails to

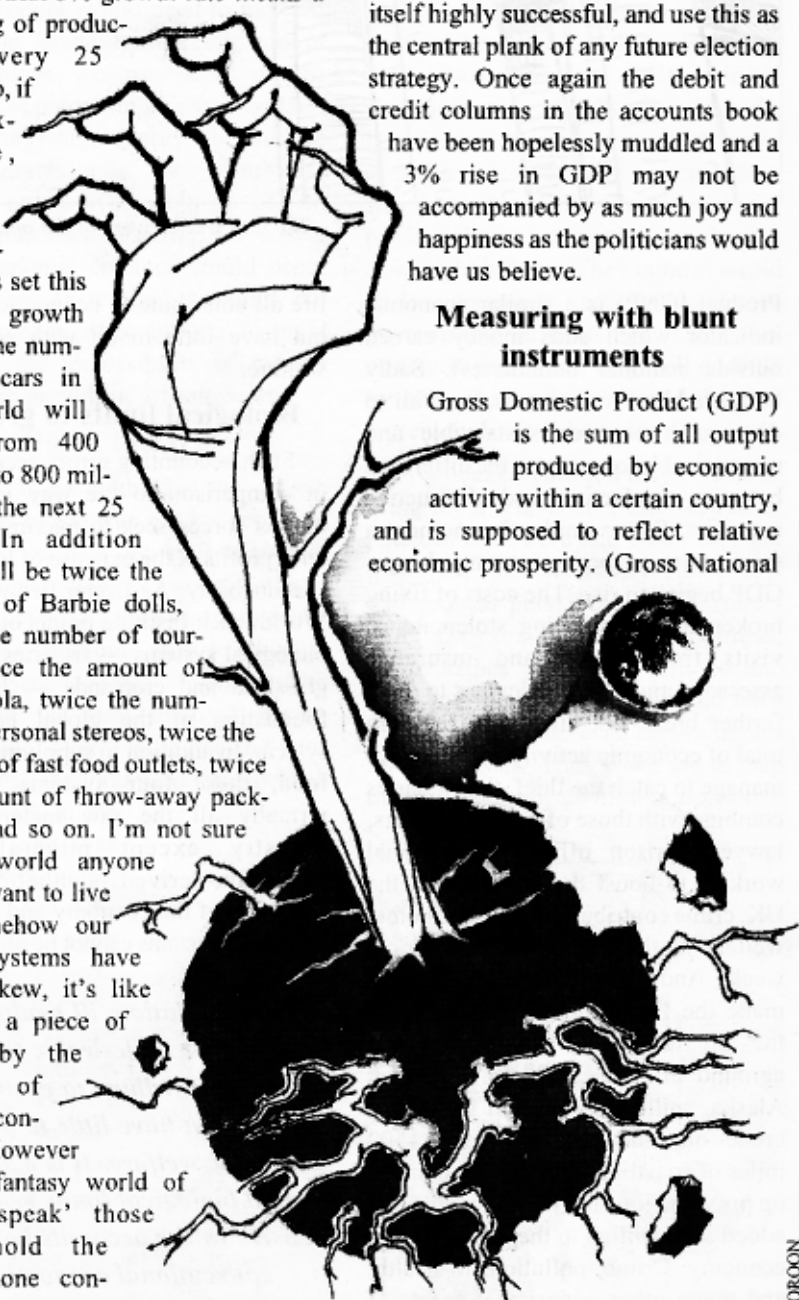
take account of how such activity interacts with the real world, and thus gets the sums hopelessly wrong.

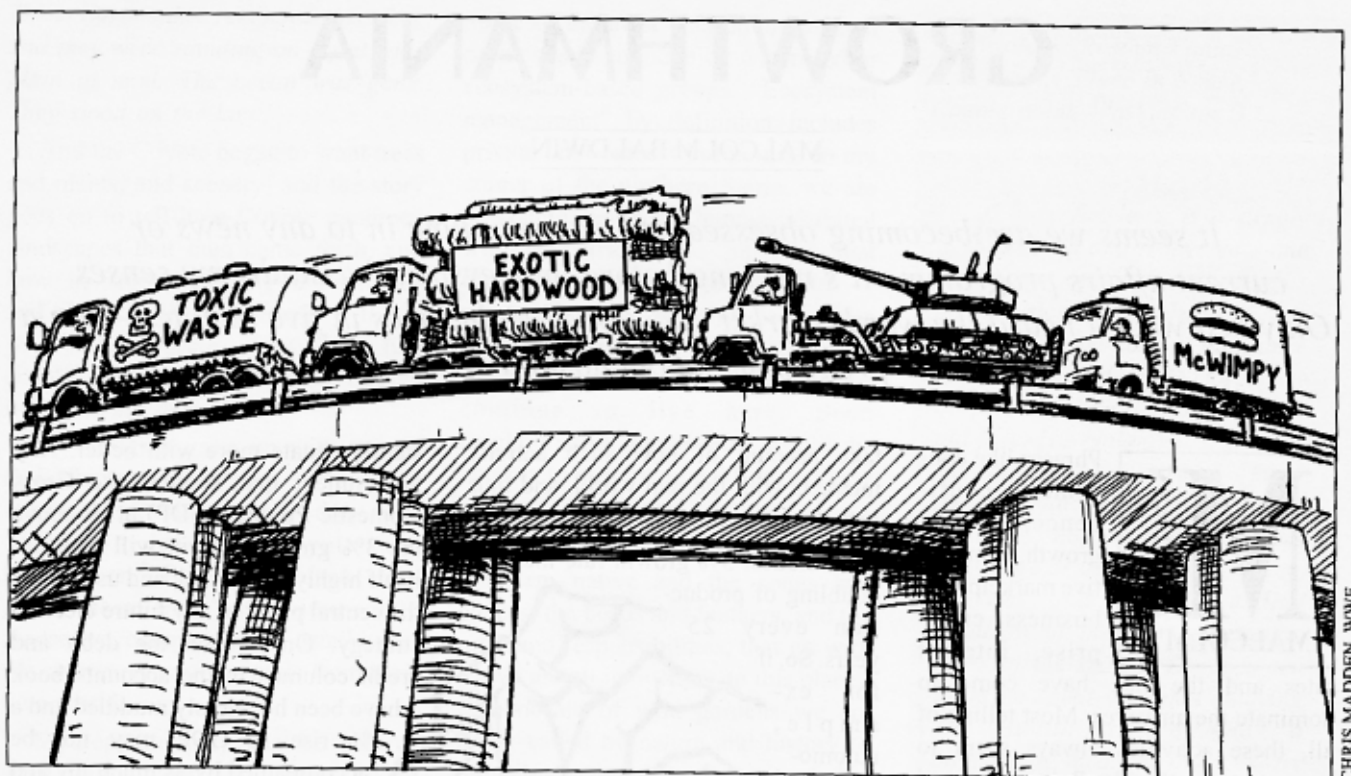
A modest 3% growth rate means a doubling of production every 25 years. So, if for example, automobile manufacturers set this as their growth target, the number of cars in the world will jump from 400 million to 800 million in the next 25 years. In addition there will be twice the number of Barbie dolls, twice the number of tourists, twice the amount of Coca-Cola, twice the number of personal stereos, twice the number of fast food outlets, twice the amount of throw-away packaging and so on. I'm not sure it's a world anyone would want to live in. Somehow our value systems have gone askew, it's like judging a piece of music by the number of notes it contains. However in the fantasy world of 'moneyspeak' those who hold the microphone con-

stantly equate more with better. Any government that sustains the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at or above the 3% growth margin will consider itself highly successful, and use this as the central plank of any future election strategy. Once again the debit and credit columns in the accounts book have been hopelessly muddled and a 3% rise in GDP may not be accompanied by as much joy and happiness as the politicians would have us believe.

## Measuring with blunt instruments

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the sum of all output produced by economic activity within a certain country, and is supposed to reflect relative economic prosperity. (Gross National





*The four truckdrivers of the apocalypse*

CHRIS MADDEN, WWF

Product (GNP) is a similar economic indicator which adds money earned outside national boundaries). Sadly both are blunt instruments, and fail to distinguish between sustainable and unsustainable, or measure the difference between productive and destructive activities. For example, the moment a thief starts to break into my house, GDP begins to rise. The costs of fixing broken locks, replacing stolen items, visits from police and insurance assessors, and security devices to deter further break-ins, all add to the sum total of economic activity. If detectives manage to catch the thief, their salaries combine with those of judicial officers, lawyers, prison officers, and social workers to boost the statistics. In the UK, crime contributes to our 'economic welfare' to the tune of \$ 100 million a week! And it's not only crime that can make the figures look good. In 1989 the oil tanker, Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound in Alaska, spilling 11 million gallons of crude oil, and polluting over 1500 miles of coastline. The six month clean up provided jobs for 10,000 people and added \$ 1.3 billion to the United States economy. Crime, pollution, ill health, and many other undesirable facets of

life all contribute to economic growth but have little to do with economic welfare.

### **Biological limits to growth**

Such accounting errors seem trivial in comparison to the way in which market forces seek to maximise short term profits at the expense of long term sustainability. As Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute points out: 'Four biological systems — fisheries, forests, grassland and croplands — form the foundation of the global economic system. In addition to supplying all our food, these four systems provide virtually all the raw materials for industry except minerals and petroleum-derived synthetics. The condition of the economy and of these biological systems cannot be separated.'

*Crime, pollution, ill health, and many other undesirable facets of life all contribute to economic growth but have little to do with economic welfare. It is a sad fact that biological limits remain absent in the accounts books of conventional economists.*

However, it is a sad fact that such biological limits remain absent in the accounts books of conventional economists. In the scramble to measure economic growth, the long term prospects for prosperity are usually marginalised.

Fish catches rose to 100 million tons in 1989, but are now falling. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) warns that all seventeen of the world's major fisheries have reached or exceeded sustainable limits, and nine are in serious decline. The natural capital of forests is seen as nothing more than a cashcrop to be clear-felled and turned into instant monetary profit. On a world scale, in area the size of Austria, is denuded each year with consequent loss of sustainable employment and genetic diversity. Rangelands and croplands are also under assault from the dogma of growth. Between 1950 and 1985 grain harvests providing half the world's calories grew at around 3% per annum, outstripping population growth. However in the second half of the eighties, growth began to decline as farmers reached biological constraints. In 1988 America failed to grow enough grain to feed its own population for the



first time in its history. World grain stocks fell from a record high in 1986 and are now approaching their lowest levels ever. Various causes have been cited — the 1987 drought in India, the USA, Canada and China has been attributed to global warming. Soil degradation adds to the diminishing returns. In the 1970's American farmers lost six tons of soil for every ton of grain grown, and worldwide it is calculated that loss of topsoil amounts to 24 billion tonnes annually — about the same amount as covers the entire Australian wheatlands. Pollutants such as ozone and sulphur dioxide degrade harvests while increased salinisation of irrigated fields causes further losses — all this at a time when global population is increasing by 90 million each year.

### The 'trickle down' lie

Biological constraints to economic growth are often swept aside in favour of other arguments. Allegedly an expanding economy is supposed to create wealth which will eventually trickle down to every citizen in the global economy. Sadly the figures suggest that the opposite is happening. In 1960 the poorest 20% of world population received 2.3% of global income. Following 30 years of economic growth, that share had shrunk to 1.4%. Australian lecturer, Dr. Trainer points to the absurdity of the 'trickle down' argument. 'The total amount of production or wealth generated each year has actually been trebled since World War II, while around 10% of people have remained under the poverty line.' He adds that if 'all countries were to reach the living standards characteristic of developed countries now, then world output of goods and services would have to be 13.3 times what it was in 1979 — a quite impossible level in view of available resources.' Even with such absurd levels of growth, at least 10 % of the population would remain below the poverty line.

There's an equally sobering message from the economist, Manfred Max-Neef. He imagines a benign world government, which by the year 2010 wants all poor citizens to achieve a standard of living similar to developed

***As a start we need to get our sums right and replace crude economic indicators with much more sophisticated models. Thus GDP would be replaced by GPI - a Genuine Progress Indicator. Such a model would take into account aspects of life which have hitherto been considered worthless.***

countries in 1960 — they hope to achieve this by economic growth. He argues that taking into account population growth forecasts, gross world product would need to increase seven fold. However, at present rates of consumption we use 25% of the products of photosynthesis (green plants using the sun's energy to produce carbohydrates). So, two doublings would appropriate 100% of all photosynthesised material. Of course total economic collapse would occur long before we reached that limit, but the argument illustrates in a vivid manner, the impossibility of infinite economic growth in a finite world.

### Down to earth

There is no doubt that the growth strategies of the free market economy have the power to deliver, but even in conventional economic language what's the point of producing ever more goods for those without any purchasing power? Secondly has all this growth added to the sum total of human happiness? There is increasing evidence that individual welfare peaked in the USA in the 1970's, and has fallen ever since. Here in the UK, politicians keep relating growth figures to the 'feelgood factor' which remains totally elusive to the public. In short we need new economic strategies to take us into the next century and beyond.

As a start we need to get our sums right and replace crude economic indicators with much more sophisticated models. Thus GDP would be replaced by GPI — a Genuine Progress Indicator. Such a model would take into account aspects of life which have hitherto been considered worthless. A few which immediately spring to mind are habitat destruction, loss of species, the nurturing and supportive activities of women, pollution, the costs of commuting and depletion of non-renewable resources.

Secondly governments (and we ordinary men and women) need to tackle head on; the absurdities of globalisation in the economy. This is far too large a subject to be dealt with here, but briefly, multinational companies control 70% of world trade. It is these unelected representatives of growthmania who hold the microphone, spend countless millions on advertising, public relations campaigns, and often downright bribery. They control world trade agreements and hold elected governments in contempt. Their soul motive is profit, and they will do little to help the underprivileged beyond extremely limited boundaries.

A global corporation may be able to bring me a television from Taiwan or potatoes from Peru and claim they are giving me value for money. However if that process puts local manufacturers and farmers out of business, impoverishes my neighbourhood and takes the food from people who have greater need, where is the value for money in that? Thus if we are to step off this treadmill of infinite economic



growth, the most important first step is to resist globalisation and create local markets which can operate on a sustainable basis.

Secondly it is crucially important that all cultures recognise the biological limits to economic welfare, particularly in energy and food production. There is an urgent necessity to phase out the power from the sun (conversion of the sun's rays into electricity), passive solar design in architecture, high insulation standards in cold climates, power from the wind and tides and small scale hydro-power from rivers. All these technologies exist — there is nothing magical or mystical about them, and it is up to every citizen to pressurise politicians to adopt policies for renewable energy. If we don't, the

combined effects of global climate change and pollution may prove impossible for any government to handle.

Lastly, the bedrock of local sustainable markets is the small farmer and small business who serve an immediate community. In the scramble for economic growth they have been marginalised, but now there is a dawning recognition that if we are to feed the world's burgeoning population, the smash and grab policies of multinationals may be less than satisfactory. If we ordinary people want true value for money we should put a high price on the continued prosperity of people who understand local conditions — they will have a much longer shelf-life than the brightly

packaged items of the global growthmania market. ☸

*Malcolm Baldwin is a gifted teacher, writer and a dedicated environmentalist. Born in the UK, he has a B.Ed degree from the University of Sussex. He has worked in theatre and as film editor mainly for BBC productions. He is deeply committed to organisations such as Green Peace, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Investigation Agency and has produced environmental educational material. Malcolm lives in Devon, UK.*

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## THE SACRED AND SECULAR IN PEOPLE'S DOMAIN

KISHORE SAINT

*Sacred groves are repositories not only of boitic and genetic diversity but are also foci of cultural and ethical practices and codes critical to the livelihood of the community.*

I wish to explore the reality of sacred groves from a stance of multiplicity of meaning and interpretation. Every concrete natural-social feature on the earth's surface is an embodiment and expression of a great multitude of natural and human impulses, energies, relations and creeds. Without this understanding there is a serious danger of reductionism through which dimensions and categories of meaning distinct and autonomous, get reduced into one-dimensional rationality. From this restriction of perception there is only a short step to theological, legal and technological definition, appropriation and incorporation into the dominant systems of Church, State and market management. This results in a permanent rupture and undermining of the human-nature relationship at the

local community level, usually with adverse implications for both nature and people. In trying to describe and interpret the significance and regenerative potential of sacred groves we have to take cognizance of the whole range of natural, social and spiritual factors which have ensured their survival, relevance and importance.

Let us begin by recognising that in Indian popular perception and practice there is no rigid division between the sacred and secular aspects of sacred groves. In Rajasthan there is usually an overlap between *gochar* or common pasture and *oran*, the sacred woodlot around a temple. This is analogous to the sacred-secular attitudes and usages related to the cow. Shubhu Patwal, a journalist-activist in Bikaner has done an extensive study of *gochar-orans* in

western Rajasthan. He has shown that the existence of these pastures-groves is a part of an ancient tradition with a built-in sense of the sacred and of benefit to all. This tradition has played a vital role in the continuance and flourishing of an animal husbandry based culture and the economy of the communities in the Thar desert region. Both rulers and the well-to-do traders took initiative in ensuring the protection of *gochars*. According to a 1937 state order a fine of twenty five rupees was levied for grazing sheep in the *gochar* and eleven rupees for doing cultivation there. Earlier in 1733, a pasture of 500 hectares was set aside at the request of a trader named Nathu Shah. It is named after him as *Sada Nathania*. Similarly, there is a record of a nearly 200 hectare *oran* around the famous Karnimate temple renowned as a refuge



for rodents. No standing tree is allowed to be cut here and there is no commercial exploitation of wood. When some trees had to be cut to put a railway line through this *oran*, the ruler prayed for the deity's permission and deposited a hundred rupees per tree as compensation into the temple account.

In our area the sacred grove around Ubeshwar Mahadev (a Shiva temple) is surrounded by village pastures. This is close to the source of the local stream and is a watering and resting place for the cattle. By custom no cowdung is removed from this area. It is allowed to decay. The dried dung-cakes are used for making *bati* (local bread) by villagers and other pilgrims who visit the temple at various festivals. In this arrangement the sanctity of the domain ensures the ready and plentiful availability of an important energy source for the benefit of all.

These examples suggest that the sacred groves are repositories not only of boitic and genetic diversity but are also foci of cultural and ethical practices and codes critical to the livelihood of

the community based on land, water and vegetation in its specific eco-niche. There is need for much more detailed site and locality-wise study of this matrix of usage and belief related to sacred groves. We all know about the Bishnois of Rajasthan and their twenty nine point sacral ecological ethic for the protection of the Khejri tree (*prosopis cineraria*) and wildlife in their habitat. There are sufficient indications that similar codes of self and social regulation have evolved amongst other communities and have been sanctified and reinforced through association with sacred sites. These need to be rediscovered on a wide ranging basis.

I now turn to a broader and a more hoary aspect of the 'sacred' in the sacred groves, viz. the whole sense and concept of Vrindavan, the actual and

***The expressions of the 'sacred' in sacred groves are in the folklore, songs, rituals and festivals performed around these places.***

mythical playgrove of Krishna, Radha and their companions. Let me invoke it vide a *pada*, or stanza, of the Hindi poet Ratnakar:

*Naval Vrindavan Sobha dham  
Naval vasant naval malyanil taruvar  
naval lalam  
Naval kusum makrand naval ras  
lolup naval milind  
Naval mor suksari kokila kuhkat  
naval suchhand  
Naval kisor naval lilarat naval  
kisori sang  
Naval prem anand naval ati murchhit  
naval anang*

This is an ode to Vrindavan in spring. Here is an inevitably inadequate, translation:

*Behold the new Vrindavan, the  
glorious place of pilgrimage,  
The new spring with fresh south  
breeze, and crimson saplings  
And new buds with new fragrance  
and young bees greedy for nectar  
The new peacocks and the new  
nightingales singing new melodies  
The new youth dancing with young  
maidens, stricken by cupid*



*With new love and ecstasy beyond consciousness.*

There is no need to elaborate here the many splendid hues and nuances, sensibilities and inspiration that the theme and motifs of Vrindavan have bequeathed to the folk and classical arts and to India's spiritual ethos. We are all familiar with Vrindavan as the abode of peace and harmony, as the venue of Radha's yearning for and meeting with Krishna, and, above all, 'as the earthly counterpart of *goloka* which comes into being with the *avatar* or incarnation of Krishna with all his playful abandon, ecstasy and bliss.'

My purpose in drawing attention to this expansive aspect of the 'sacred' in sacred groves is two-fold. First, I wish to suggest that together with what can be called eco-sociology there is an aesthetic and religious aspect of these groves that awaits discovery. Its expressions are in the folklore, songs, rituals and festivals performed around these places. Second, there is need to recognize the connections and parallels between local and specific

manifestations and traditions and the overarching, universal concepts like Vrindavan. There is ample evidence that the larger currents of the Bhakti Movement and the local traditions are informed by the same cultural and civilizational *bodh* and *samvedna*. And, as the literary spiritual creativity of Kabir, Nanak, Mira, Dadu, Farid, Amir Khusro, Raskhan, Rahim and Tagore testifies, these sensibilities and inspirations transcend sectarian boundaries.

Finally, let me look at sacred groves as examples of what is known as the 'commons'. This extends the meaning of commons beyond common property resources. For this I shall take the concept of commons enunciated by the well-known thinker, Ivan Illich. According to him 'Commons are a cultural space that lies beyond my threshold and this side of wilderness. Custom defines the different usefulness of commons for each one. The commons are porous. The same spot for different purposes can be used by different people. And, above all, custom protects the commons. The commons are not community resources, the commons

become a resource only when the lord or community encloses them. Enclosure transmogrifies commons into a resource for the extraction, production or circulation of commodities. Commons are as vernacular as vernacular speech'. This depiction of commons has even greater validity in the case of sacred groves with their multiplicity of purposes, customary protection, lack of enclosure, non-commodity character and location 'this side of wilderness' as an expression of the divine.

In the foregoing discussion, I have tried to recognize sacred groves as

- refugia for bio-genetic diversity
- repositories of ethno-social codes of relation and regulation vis a vis nature
- Venues of local and universal manifestation of aesthetic tradition and religiosity.
- community resources
- commons or cultural space between private domain and the rest of the cosmos.

In all these respects, sacred groves have undergone decline and shrinkage with the growth of contemporary systems of natural resource management dominated by global elitist privatisation, statism, energy intensive technology and commodity markets. Today all these arrangements are themselves in a state of crisis and faced with unsustainability in the future. This has led to the search for new patterns and sources of insight for the human-nature relationship, natural resource management, maintenance of biodiversity and recovery of the commons. Study of sacred groves in all their manifold meaning offers a rich field for this exploration. ❧

*Illustrations: Rupam Bhattacharya*

*Kishore Saint's is a well known voice in the development discourse. He is attached to the Ubeshwar Vikas Mandal, Udaipur, Rajasthan, which engages itself in research and activism. It is at the forefront of campaigns to foster sustainable development in the Rajasthan Aravallis.*

# LAMENT OF AN INDO-CANADIAN

PREM KUMAR

*It's like a faint toothache that you can't pinpoint. Or like a light fever that persists without a reason. Or it's like a peculiar loneliness that imbues you in a dainty park where sedate picnickers are lolling and eating and giggling in the holiday season.*

*But it is always with you.*

*It's a nameless feeling, an inchoate notion saying that, somehow, you don't 'belong here'. Sometimes it is so feeble that you almost forget it; at other times, it is quite robust. But it's always at the back of your mind.*

*In truth, it has become a part of your being.*

*But why this feeling?*

Because you are a member of Canada's 'visible minority'; a 'coloured person' is the epithet bestowed on you. You loathe the label 'coloured'. It is false, since you and your kids have a smooth wheatish chroma, inherited from the inter-mingling of generations of Aryans and local tribes who once inhabited northern India. All around you see white women who, with torturous sunbathing, have exchanged their porcelain skin color to a half of your brownish hue, and are very proud of it. Yet no one calls them 'coloured' persons. The nameless feeling deepens as the fact dawns that you are a mere two per cent of the Canadian population. Living in an ocean of white majority, you seem to stick out like an oddity in the crowd.

In two decades, you have been stereotyped by the Canadian media and the government. You are expected to live in a certain neighbourhood, to work in a certain category of vocations, and act in a certain manner. Also, you learn that coming from a 'hot' country, you are genetically unfit to live in a cold country like Canada. The plethora of fact and fiction has been painstakingly compiled. It makes you timorous and overly self-conscious.

You tread warily lest you be in a 'wrong' place such as a fancy hotel, a public park, a flashy car, or even be married to a white person.

Of course, no law or person tells you so, directly. Indeed, one often sees infractions of the norm. There are Indo-Canadians who have white spouses, who own highrise buildings and motels, who live in posh localities, who drink imported wines, and who even hold elected offices or senior positions in the professions. I am one of them. But these are exceptions; like an elephant who can ride a bicycle, a sort of deviant behaviour.

Reality is different though. It is writ large on the face of urban Canada. It proclaims that most Indo-Canadians work as cab and truck drivers, cleaning ladies, parking lot attendants, corner-store operators, petty clerks, guards and as low-paid employees in stores, hotels, farms, factories, sawmills, and sundry sweatshops of the nation. The field is getting crowded as more Indo-Canadians are seeking entry here.

Paradoxically, as the community's population rose, its level of employment in the professions and white-collar categories declined. "There was a time when Indian professors were found in

## Indians in Canada

Presently some half a million people of Indian origin live in Canada. 'Until recently, nearly all Indians in Canada came from one small province in northern India, Punjab...', says a 1984 Canadian publication. Canadian immigration laws were relaxed for Third World citizens only in the 1960s, which brought more Indians from India and Fiji, East Africa, Mauritius, the West Indies, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and elsewhere. Yet Sikhs count for more than fifty per cent of the Indian population in Canada. Among Canadian Sikhs, Jats form a majority. Indians are variously called East Indians, Indo-Canadians or a visible, ethnic or coloured minority, which includes Blacks, Asians and Hispanics.

Indian immigration to Canada started with Jat Sikhs, who numbered some 400 in 1904; between 1904 and 1908, more than 9000 'Indian men' landed in British Columbia, Canada's west coast province known for its



most Canadian universities, teaching everything from algebra to engineering to zoology", says Dr. Prithipaul, a former professor at the University of Alberta. Now when the student population has trebled, the number of Indian professors is much smaller.

The same is true of Indian school teachers who once played a prominent role in educating Canadians in remote communities. They were hired because white teachers wouldn't go there for lack of amenities. As amenities have arrived lately, so also have the white teachers. Consequently, from northern Ontario to northern Alberta, the once ubiquitous Indian teacher has vanished; more accurately, has been banished. On the other hand, few Indians are ever hired as teachers in the nation's urban schools. The result is high unemployment among well-trained Indo-Canadian teachers.

The Canadian public sector — federal, provincial, municipal governments and public corporations — is the largest source of jobs. It is also heralded as an equal opportunity employer. Yet, for Indo-Canadians, it is openly a racist employer where systemic discrimination is rampant, says Ms. Thobani, head of the Status of Women, Canada's NGO Concerned with feminist issues.

***Most Indo-Canadians work as cab and truck drivers, cleaning ladies, parking lot attendants, corner-store operators, petty clerks, guards and as low-paid employees in stores, hotels, farms, factories, sawmills, and sundry sweatshops of the nation.***

For example, the federal government in Ottawa, employs some 250,000 people, yet visible minority work force is barely 3.5%, mostly confined to low-rank jobs. The few highly qualified Indo-Canadian professionals continue to stagnate. Lately, the Canadian Human Rights Commission has awarded relief to some of them who were bold enough to complain, particularly in the federal departments of national research councils, foreign aid and public health. It's ironic that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) spends a fortune to give language and cultural training through consultants for its white Canadian foreign aid workers, but it rarely hires 'coloured' Canadians who are familiar with the Third World's cultures and languages. Indeed, there is a de facto 'whites only' policy for many a federal job, says Y. Sharma, a former federal employee.

mild climate. Most of them were Jat Sikhs. In 1914, 376 Punjabis arrived on the steamship Komagata Maru but were refused entry and returned after waiting two months in a British Columbia harbour. Some Hindu students from Bengal and one Punjabi, Har Dyal, had in the meantime started the Gadr party in the US, and appealed to the local Sikhs to fight for Indian freedom.

As a result, some Sikhs did return to India only to be arrested on arrival as the Canadian government had secretly informed the British. Indians in Canada numbered 2342 in 1911; 1061 in 1921; 1500 in 1939; and 6500 in 1950. Females were seldom allowed. By 1941, there were only 165 Indian women over nineteen years of age, while most men were much older. Until 1950 most Indians in Canada were Sikhs.

Unlike Chinese who worked as coolies, domestics, kitchen help, and laundry workers in Canada, Sikhs worked mostly in sawmills. Often they lived in bunkhouses and other rundown buildings, crowded and eating from their common kitchens, away from the white community. Make-shift gurdwaras were set up.

**Since 1951:** When India won Independence in 1947 and became a member of the British Commonwealth, Canada had to ease immigration rules. From a token 150 persons annually allowed in 1951, Indians arrived at an average yearly rate of 8,000 during the 1970s. Between 1951 and 1979, some 93,000 Indians had reached Canada. In the 1980s the yearly rate was much higher. Since 1990, nearly 15,000 Indians have arrived yearly. During the 1970s and 80s family unification rules allowed Indian immigrants to sponsor parents and siblings. Currently, family unification in favour of 'old persons' is not allowed. Canada is now seeking only young, educated immigrants such as engineers and computer experts.



*Indian taxi drivers in Canada.*

Junior governments get their cue from Ottawa. The provincial Government of Ontario, for instance, has recently withdrawn its much vaunted policy of hiring well-qualified visible minority staff to balance off the past discrimination. The Edmonton Municipal Government, in a rare impulse to restore some equity in employment, recently hired eight well-qualified visible minority fire-fighters, only to reverse the decision under pressure from the white voters. The Province of Quebec unashamedly says that its work force is 98% white and French-speaking, and the situation will never change in favour of the visible minority. Says Kris Syal, a social worker of Edmonton, "Decent jobs for Indo-Canadians are rare in the three levels of Government. The public sector seems determined to keep the status quo."

The situation in the private sector is

worse. Professional jobs in banks, law and engineering firms, and in oil, gas, steel, and pulp industries are not easily had for Indo-Canadians with excellent qualifications; and if employed, promotions are unthinkable. A glass ceiling separates them at the management level. It's a common practice with many employment agencies in Ontario to screen out all visible minority applicants before the interview stage, noted the Ontario Government's 1993 study.

High unemployment among Indo-Canadians pushes them into a ghetto mentality. They congregate in low-income or older neighbourhoods with rundown houses. Localities such as Mill Woods in Edmonton, Mississauga in Toronto, Lachine in Quebec, and clusters of streets in Vancouver, Surrey, and elsewhere, confirm the emerging residential pattern. As if to compensate for their isolation, low self-esteem and

small net worth, there is an upsurge to build gurudwaras, temples and mosques; where besides spirituality, sectarian politics also seeks central attention. It's not uncommon to hear diatribes against India or sycophancy for a local white MP in attendance.

Lately, the Canadian-born educated generation is showing some intellectual courage and stridency. These young people often can't read or write Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu or a host of other Indian

*As if to compensate for their isolation, low self-esteem and small net worth, there is an upsurge to build gurudwaras, temples and mosques; where besides spirituality, sectarian politics also seeks central attention.*



*A gurudwara in Edmonton.*

## Racism

Indo-Canadians emigrate primarily for economic reasons; lately, family unification was also a major reason. Invariably, every Indian immigrant encounters racism, covert, overt and systemic.

Cultural racism implies remaining outside the pale of mainstream culture. Ostracism is natural, because of the

different skin colour, dress patterns, flowing beards, loud talking, belching, spicy foods and gurudwaras and temples, ghetto-formation, inter and intra-group rivalries and violence, and other behaviours that are typical of Indians. The cultural chasm between the minority and the white majority is huge. The majority feels threatened. Arrival of even a few minority residents in a white neighbourhood

may devalue property, some reports say.

Indo-Canadians also suffer from economic racism. For one thing, most Indian college degrees are devalued or not accepted. Thus most Indian immigrants must re-educate themselves here, which is a long, expensive, tough road. Those who cross this hurdle face yet another, possibly a tougher one—getting a suitable job. As Canada suffers from frequent economic downturns, Indians even with Canadian degrees are often the last to be hired and the first to be fired in professional categories.

Unsurprisingly, most new, young immigrants choose the easier route of working in low-paid, semi-skilled jobs. Minimum-waged, soul-crushing work is available aplenty as whites often decline it. Thus, coloured immigrants doing menial jobs is a common sight in Canada. However, the Canadian-born generation, now adult, educated and vocal, is about to seek a fairer share of the socio-economic pie. Canada is likely to witness soon a new tussle by the visible minority for cultural/ economic equality.



languages; nor are they overly keen to sort out the complicated theology and memorize the succession and exploits of the religious heroes. Instead, they are bathed in North American mores and culture. This crop of young Indians — lawyers, doctors, teachers and trades persons of every description — are determined to break out of the metaphorical but regressive milieu that has to date kept their parents, immigrants from India, mostly poor and voiceless. It's going to be an uphill task.

Canada has a long history of virulent racism. French-Canadians, Aborigines, Jews, Ukrainians, Italians, Chinese and Japanese have suffered the pain of racism, laments the federal Secretary of State brochure. The Canadian Multicultural Act (1988) proscribes racism on the basis of skin color, race, religion, dress, and country of origin. Fortunately, racism against white Canadians has virtually vanished, making Canada one of the most tolerant nations.

But racism based on skin colour is alive and kicking. Some Canadian political parties thrive on the sheer racist platform. Nearly 60 per cent of prisoners in Canadian jails are the Aborigines. The Sikhs encounter widespread discrimination in Canada, says J. Singh of Edmonton. The University of Ottawa's Roberts recommends a stronger set of laws to deal with 'hate crimes' such as beating up of colored persons and desecration of their places of worship. It will be perhaps another 25 years before Canada rid itself of the curse of racism based on skin colour. Until that happens, the so-called 'coloured' Indo-Canadians will always have the 'nameless feeling' of not belonging here while being here. Yet, personally, I will not exchange Canada for any other country. %

## Why stay in Canada?



*Small scale businesses run by Indians. A glass ceiling separates them at the management level.*

Yet all things considered, few Indians return. The reason is obvious. Canada offers some of the best and the cheapest healthcare, educational and transport facilities to be found in the world. Besides, its pristine physical environment is captivating. There is no scarcity of life's basic necessities and Canadian people are mostly non-violent and law-abiding, though a tad non-communicative. Two adults working at a minimum wage can make a decent living.

Indian parents therefore choose to 'tough it out' at minimum wage in

lowly jobs for the sake of children, hoping one day they would occupy better stations in life. However, this dream is turning into a nightmare for many families as their offspring, raised in the North American milieu, often behave like white youth. Drinking, drugs, divorce and violence are making inroads in Indo-Canadian society. Sadly, living in modern India is not an attractive option either, as congestion, pollution and crime are rampant. In short, ambivalence is now a dominant trait of many Indo-Canadians who have not yet lost faith in India's inherent cultural excellence.

*Photos : Prem Kumar*

*Prem Kumar holds graduate degrees from Indian and Canadian universities. He has lived in Canada for the past 25 years. He has worked as a senior officer for the provincial and federal governments in Canada as well as taught in a college. He is now a freelance writer with interests in the environment, Third World issues and literature.*

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S.ANANDALAKSHMY

*Health – it's a craze today. But it seems that's all it is.*

*For health is not a work out at the gym or an oral rehydration kit. Health is not the absence of disease.*

*Fragmentation of body and mind is a sure recipe for sickness. On the one hand we have acute conditions of poverty-related malnourishment and therefore, physical deterioration and on the other, we have an over stimulation of the mind leading to neurosis and insanity.*

*The author makes a telling point when she asks us whether a man who murders his wife for a TV set or car is actually 'healthy' though his RBC count is normal !*

The problems of the globe are so interlinked that any one aspect of it reveals the whole, very much in the way a hologram does. Every small area of the hologram contains the entire image, so that the whole can be reconstructed from any part. Thus we cannot speak of the problem of developing countries without implicitly referring to the experi-

ence of colonialism and the subsequent emergence of developed and over-developed countries. We cannot speak of man-nature relationships without any reference to the epistemology of current day science, and contemporary world views. Continuing the holographic metaphor, we might be able to see what is behind the problem as well as a laser beam would do.

Health is a person's sense of well-being. I cannot imagine that anyone here will want to take cudgels with such a statement. And yet with the advancements of medicine, it has become a doctor's right to tell the person whether he is healthy and what shall be done to him. Ivan Illich's brilliant case for the *Limits to Medicine* must be too well known to be restated here. Today the health system is a capital-intensive medical system. We have begun to define 'health' as equivalent to 'health facilities' and so the number of beds in the local hospital becomes the criterion to assess the health of the community. The ideology has been so well communicated that even the person in the remotest areas asks not to feel better but to get an 'injection'. In most cases of modern medicine, technique has passed off as treatment. Manu Kothari and Lopa Mehta in *The Tao of Death* (1984) sum up diverse medical views in saying that 90 % of the 'bad' things that happen to the human body are beyond the ken of modern medicine, and can therefore be termed trans-technique. And this is the heady era of Computerised Tomographic Scans! Nevertheless medical technology holds us in awe and is confused as therapy.

We also still labour under the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, which translates as the mind-body dichotomy in ordinary thinking. So when the word 'health' is used, it generally denotes the health of the body – physical health, which can presumably be measured, quantified and evaluated in objective terms. Mental or psychic health or the subjective feeling about how one feels is beyond the purview of the salesmen of health. Psycho-somatic illness has now been incorporated into orthodox medicine and yet the somato-psychic relationship is not well understood. I agree that good nutrition and the absence of disease provide a necessary condition to good health, but they are not sufficient. For the rest of this presentation, I shall treat both aspects of what can be roughly termed, physical and mental health as part of my paradigm. Likewise, while nutrition would be covered by food intake, I

shall also refer to the 'intake' that influences mental health.

We are what we eat. There is food for thought in that! Traditionally, three *gunas* have been identified: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. All foods could be fitted into these groups and intake would add that quality or *guna* to the person. The concept of balance was of the essence — balance among different kinds of foods. Today the Sanskrit roots are attenuated and folk wisdom relegated to the category of 'superstition'. The nutritionist now uses the standard taxonomy of western science, of the three basic food groups. In this system again, the concept of balance is most salient. This grammar of food is not commonly known even by those with a few years of education.

Today's major health-nutrition problem is that of under-nutrition and malnutrition. Simply stated, there is not enough food being consumed by those in the lowest socio-economic groups, especially women and children. The solution does not lie in merely educating people on nutritional values and cooking methods. The more basic step would be to ensure adequate employment opportunities, food as wages, and a subsidized public distribution system. It is particularly important to provide these in areas where the natural resources of field and forest have been denuded by an over-paced development strategy.

Mass poverty is the devastating cause of some of the major health problems in the country. Non-availability of clean drinking water, insanitary surroundings and



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malnutrition combine with poverty to make a death trap for the very young. In the seventies, the report titled *Health Services and Medical Education: Programme for Immediate Action* was published. I remember attending a lecture that Ivan Illich was giving, where he commended the excellence of this report. The inherent weakness of the machinery was its non-implementation and the lack of political

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will. Ivan Illich was excited about the report because he could not have foreseen that the essence of it would dry up on dusty shelves.

Small voluntary agencies have succeeded in achieving health goals, where the government has failed. What are the components of a success story in the delivery of health in a village? Ultimately, the human factor is the most important.

When the doctor is seen as kind, sympathetic and competent, people flock to her or him. The kind of health work in rural India is time-intensive and personnel-intensive. Working with people in communities is like working with organic material — giving them time to grow. Health cannot be improved by fiat. The DNA that controls and governs the self-maintenance, the reproduction and self-destruction of organisms must be seen as part of the universal. It is only logical that we extend this to social institutions, to communities and to organizations that we have come to treat as non organic.

An upward spiral of good food and good health can also be visualised, where the inputs enhance one another. Nutrition and health have a synergistic relationship. The concept of *synergy* is useful here. Derived from the Greek *synergia*, which means *working with*, it describes the capacity of two forces, persons, or structures of information to optimize one another and achieve mutual enhancement. This concept has been incorporated into the physical sciences by Buckminster Fuller, who defines it as the behaviour of whole systems not predicted by the behaviour of their parts. For example, the metal alloy of chrome, nickel and steel is much stronger than any one of these metals singly. Ruth Benedict, the anthropologist, is credited with introducing the concept of synergy into the social sciences. In her study of several American Indian communities, she considered a multitude of variables and came to the conclusion that



*While an unstimulating world could be dull, an over-stimulating world could lead to insanity.*

'societies where non-aggression is conspicuous have social orders in which the individual by the same act and at the same time, serves his own end and that of the group'. Abraham Maslow, who was working on the self-actualizing of people, found the concept relevant to psychology. In his sample of self actualizers he found that the 'age-old opposition between head and heart...was found to disappear where they became synergic rather than antagonistic...'

My purpose in introducing synergy as a metaphor for a larger good is the consideration of mental health and psychic well being as part of the construct of health. And to logically examine the 'nutritional' inputs that we now offer to the young in our culture for their mental health. These constitute our educational inputs through the formal schools as well as the informal education that is often a more dominant influence: popular films, television, video films and radio.

The food for the mind that we provide can hardly be considered to be conducive of healthy development, and yet we find that it is what people seek. Again, the parallel to the obese person eating sweets is obvious. Somewhere along the line, the body gives up its wisdom (Cannon's wisdom of the body was a phrase found in physiology texts of yesteryears). While an unstimulating world could be dull, an over-stimulating world could lead to insanity. There are people in our cities and even in smaller towns who may spend 8 to 12 hours watching video films, sparking with violence and hardening sex stereotypes. They remind one of the rats with the electrodes implanted in the pleasure centres of the brain, which would press the levers for more stimulation. To paraphrase Marx, celluloid is the opium of the masses.

The monstrous over-growth of some parts of the world is the counterpoint to the poverty and depletion in others. The crass competitiveness which leads

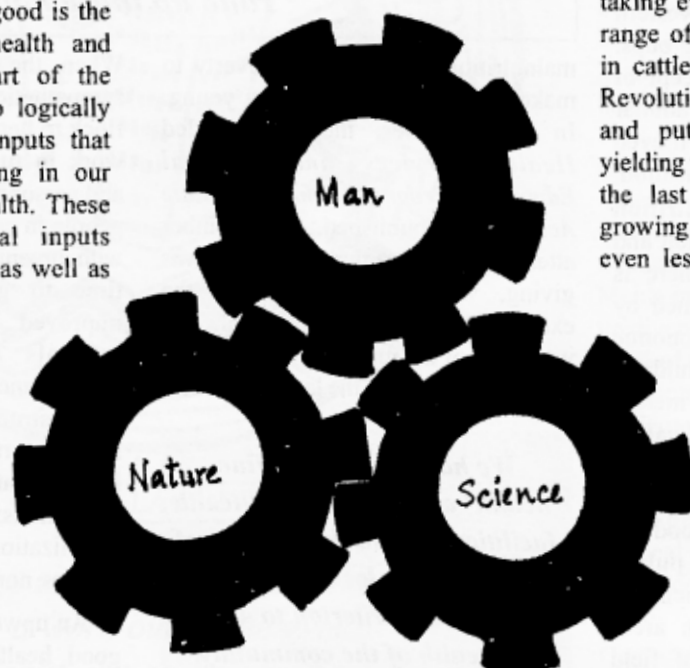
to the arms race among the super-powers results in the developing countries building up a war psychosis which encourages the import of obsolete weapons. This is done at the cost of clean drinking water in every village. We are caught in a larger network which legitimises exploitation of resources in the cause of insatiable human greed. Within the country, the same pattern prevails. The rampant materialism and the quick commercialism of contemporary Indian

then deterministic' (C.V. Seshadri, 1985). He also points out that 'Equity is not part of the starting axioms of technology but part of its glossy rejectae, attractive but wasteful. Poverty and discrimination, inter-racial, inter-communal and inter-gender have been enhanced with the wrong choices of technology mixes that have been implanted without any questions asked'. To cite only two instances, at the risk of raising a controversy: the 'White Revolution' is an example where the cash economy entered the milk market, taking even the butter-milk cut of the range of consumption of the children in cattle rearing families; the 'Green Revolution' took land away from pulses and put it under cereals of high yielding variety — the wonder breeds of the last two decades. Unless pulse growing is subsidised, there will be even less vegetable protein available for consumption in India.

I would advocate that we do not treat science as a noun (a body of knowledge, is a common definition) but as a verb, 'to science'. Sciencing must be an activity that permits the greatest degree of flexibility in choices, and keeps the human being in centre stage. So we come to the crux of the

issue: the concept of harmony, wholeness, patterning, relationships. Fragmentation and over-specialization and the lack of meaning characterise contemporary science, even though quantum physics reveals the basic oneness of the universe and a complicated web of relations between diverse parts. In the words of Gregory Bateson, we must establish the link between mind and nature, between rigour and imagination. We have become a generation of people so fascinated with left brain functions that we are confronted with a moral vacuum, literally and metaphorically 'meaning'-less.

We cannot talk about health without including both subjective and objective criteria. A man who sets his young wife on fire with intent to murder her



society cannot be denied. How do we break the vicious cycle?

More than three decades ago, Arthur Koestler, in *Sleep Walkers*, warned us that 'our hypnotic enslavement to the numerical aspects of reality has dulled our perception of non-quantitative moral values; the resultant end-justifies-the-means ethics may be the result of our undoing'. We may translate this to our current concerns. In the old days, 'god' had always to be written with a capital letter, as 'God'. Today we find that science has usurped the right to the capital letter. Science has to be written with a capital letter and is presented to the public as absolute good. 'Scientific truths are presented not as being based on a particular frame of reference and not as though their essence is probabilistic rather



since she has not brought him a coloured TV cannot be considered healthy, irrespective of his RBC count! In other words, health cannot be defined in solely measurable physical terms. It cannot be delivered to the vast population in this country, or even the possibility intelligently discussed, outside the system of values. We will somehow have to re-introduce a value for simplicity, moderation, social concern, even austerity. We cannot afford to leave the health of the next generation to growth charts or oral rehydration kits, useful as they are.

In this process of entering a new balance, we could have to begin a movement that would have to internalize the concepts of growth and development reclaiming them from economics and making them qualities of our inner life. 'Simultaneously or

sequentially, as part of the rhythm of energies there must be a reaching out as well as a delving within. Only in this way do we lend our personhood its necessary convivial dimension and follow the adventure of self-discovery through to its planet-saving purpose'.

I think we in India have a related task: to restore the confidence of our citizens in themselves. The message they have been receiving is that Utopia lies out there, somewhere in a westerly direction. They have learned to devalue their spiritual traditions, their indigenous treatment systems, their own wholesome foods. The large number of people in diverse sub-cultures have been 'patronized' but not treated as equals and as resources for ideas concerning their own lives. Those in positions of administrative power or who are potential policy

makers must genuinely internalize egalitarian values, so that the process of development can be steered in the right direction. Health makes a person integrated as well as connected to the myriad worlds outside. ☸

*Illustration: Gur Anoop Singh*

**D**r. Anandalakshmy is a potent voice in several areas — education, social and individual health, child development and nutrition. She has several years of experience as an educator, having retired as Principal from the Lady Irwin College, New Delhi. She travels widely both in India and abroad to lecture at universities and other fora. Dr. Anandalakshmy lives in Madras.

## LIFE, CONSCIOUSNESS AND HEALING



Western medicine is as old as you think it is. You can trace it back to Galen (130-200 A.D.) and even to Hippocrates (ca 460-377 B.C.); we have at least inherited writings attributed to them. Asclepius is more difficult to trace as a person, but his institution, the Asclepium is known to history and his cult was introduced at Athens in 420 B.C. The serpent was sacred to Asclepius, and is still the symbol of the medical profession.

Current western medicine likes to think of itself as rooted in the Greek tradition. We have no idea of what all sources the Greeks borrowed from. The Egyptian, the Akkadian and the Sumerian civilisations are possible sources. According to Emperor Ashoka's (ca 27-232 B.C.) Rock Edicts 11 and XII, he sent fully equipped medical missions to five city states of Greece, 'for relief of suffering of all creatures, man and beast' in the 3rd century B.C. Thus Greece inherited ancient Indian medicine in some form.

Indian and Chinese systems of medicine are definitely older than the Greek. The Ayurveda system goes back to the Vedic period and we hear about Jivaka, the physician appointed by Emperor Bimbisara to take care of Gautama the Buddha (ca 560-480 B.C.)

In China, the Nei-Ching, the classical system of medicine, was codified only in the reign of the Han dynasty (226 B.C. to 220 A.D.); systems which existed before, seem to have left no written remains.

Western medicine as we know it today does not bear much continuity with any of the ancient systems of healing. Healing was art, not science, practiced by a skilled wise man, a learned man in many things — not just in anatomy, pathology, pharmacology and kindred subjects.

Modern western medicine has evolved from the following major factors, among others:

- The Cartesian (Descartes, 1596-1650) vision of the body as a machine, largely independent of the mind;
- William Harvey's description of the blood

circulation system - largely mechanical;

- Louis Pasteur's (1822-1895) discovery of bacteria or microbes as major causes of illness;
- The development of anaesthesia and disinfection, making surgery more successful;
- Development of new diagnostic techniques, eg, the stethoscope, sphygmomanometer, and later much more sophisticated devices like X-Ray, CAT Scanner and new electronic devices;
- development of molecular and cellular biology, endocrinology and nutrition theory;
- Development of vaccination and other immunisation technologies;
- development of antibiotics;
- development of hygiene and sanitation;

**The net result of these developments has been, among other things:**

- concentration on the disease rather than on the patient;
- focus on naming the ailment (diagnosis) and then on chemical or surgical intervention to counteract the ailment.
- focus on the malfunction of the body as the root of disease, without reference to the mind or the social and physical environment, without which the body cannot function.
- shift from personal physician to clinic or hospital as primary healing agent, and the marginalisation of the role of humans in healing.
- the technologisation of healing and the soaring cost of medical care.

**Several factors have today combined to a widespread questioning of the very premises on which western medicine is based, in addition to the cost factor mentioned:**

- the high incidence of iatrogenic or hospital induced illness, up to 20% in the USA of all hospital cases;
- the perception that most drugs while treating one set of symptoms, create dangerous side effects in other parts of the body;
- the fact that antibiotics are deleterious to health, since they kill beneficial bacteria also, and besides, lead to new strains of bacteria with increased immunity to antibiotics;
- the perception that the present medical care system in many market economy countries helps more the medical practitioner, the manufacturers

and traders of pharmaceuticals and the medical insurance companies than the patients;

- the fact that western medicine is based on the mechanistic notions of modern science, notions which have been repudiated by science itself.

The mechanistic conception of the body, and the pathology-pharmacology based on it are quite outdated, though still fashionable. We are desperately in need of a new paradigm that helps to understand the body-mind as a single unit, a sub-system of a cosmic network system.

The human system is a sub-system of the whole universe, and is integrally related to it. Disturbances in that integral relation constitute disease. Restoration of that relation to the whole is healing, and the whole itself is the healing force.

Matter, life and consciousness are the healing agents. Western medicine has concentrated too exclusively on matter, and when it does focus on life, it is only to destroy through antibiotics what is regarded as harmful life. We need a framework for modern medicine in which we see matter, life and consciousness as a single continuum in reality as a whole and in the body.

This means that while pharmacology is not to be abandoned, it is to be recognized as only one element in the healing process. Equally important are life and consciousness as well as the relations of the body-mind whole to the whole of reality. The role of a loving and caring community as a healing force needs very special consideration in the wholistic pattern of health and healing centres tomorrow. Consciousness, and its various levels, including the transcendent and the hypnotic, should also be engineered positively in the interest of healing. Faith healing needs specialized attention.

It is towards such a holistic healing ministry that both medical personnel and the public should now devote most of their interests. This would mean also restructuring society in order to make all social relations holistic and health-producing, and the human environment a livable and sustainable one.

**Paulos Mar Gregorios**  
(From a larger essay called *The Whole Heals*)

# A Human Race



ANU MAJUMDAR

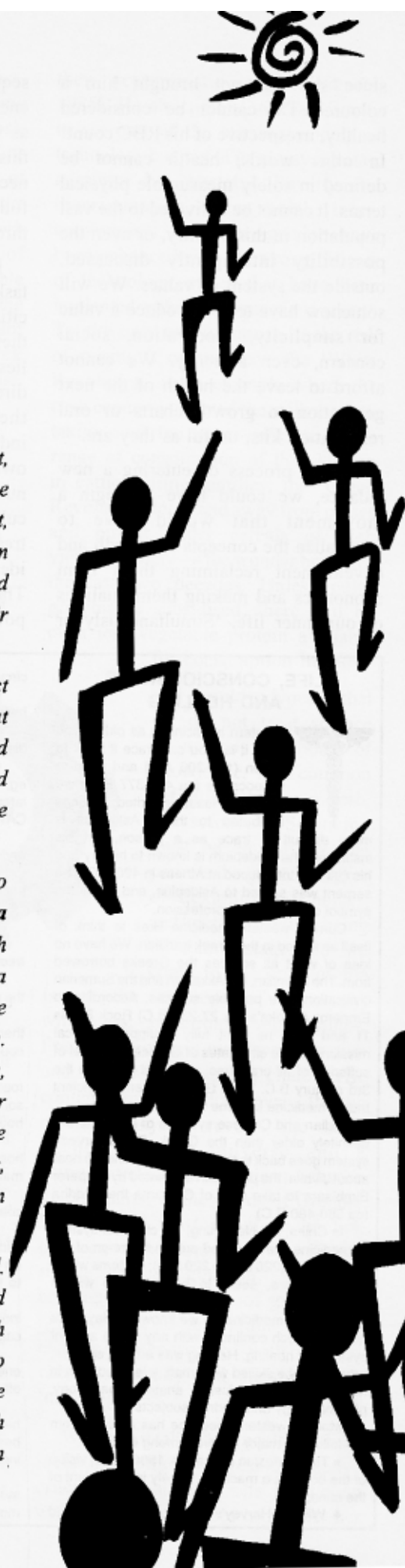
## The Players

● **The Amalgamate Management** — Once a little ahead in the present, the world faced a strange dilemma, God outpaced everything. All the time. It was frustrating. The ego, in abundant supply across the planet, was miffed. So the Management offered a challenge to God in the form of a seminar. Their plan was to first somehow extract God's secret and then show Him his rightful place in the Universe. However, even their best laid plans were constantly foiled.

● **Miss World** — From India, was employed by the Management to act as a spy and find out God's secrets. She did. It was a special Speed. But since the Management was slow to react when she returned and generally missed the whole point, both Miss World and the secret slipped through their fingers and disappeared. When they realised their mistake it was too late and so a frantic hunt began.

● **Nachiketas** — Immortal souls as we know, have a free passport into life whenever they want. Nachiketas, the young hero of the **Katha Upanishad**, who once earned three boons from Yama, the God of Death decided to return to earth. He landed in Calcutta and began life as a newspaper vendor. He read about Miss World's encounter with the God(s) and was intrigued. He wrote to her. They met, became friends. With his help, Miss World took a trip through the Vedas and Upanishads, encountering several ancient & modern seers, which helped her understand God's speed better. In turn she brought Nachiketas upto date with Star TV, Internet and the search for the God Particle. However, since the Amalgamate Management was after Miss World, both of them had to be on the run.

● **God** — Singular or plural. Both or none according to demand. Having masterminded all the events, they watch the play of the world unfold. They act in various ways. They offer effective, though unconventional consultancy to Miss World. They even arrange things so that Nachiketas can help her further. At the same time God makes sure that the discontent of the Amalgamate Management is well fanned with furore, so that they never give up their search. Because God has a plan for them too...



## Episode 1 : The Contest

*The Amalgamate Management offers God a challenge by inviting him to a seminar. God accepts but remains frustratingly elusive. So the Management sends out a spy, Miss World, to steal God's secrets. Unfortunately, their plan misfires, because this Miss World is an unusual lady who enjoys the laughter of the Gods and learns from them eagerly. When she returns from her mission and reports, they are overcome with distress and fail to see the point. Miss World slips away even as contradictory news and views about God continue to circulate around the world.*

One day, just a little ahead in the present, it was discovered that the Gods ran faster. They were always ahead. It wasn't as though they were running a race or something. They didn't pant or send their heartbeats up the Richter Scale. They just sprinted along. Watching the world blossom.

The problem was that all the mortals got left behind. Always. They tried everything. Vitamins, broccoli, chavanprasa, sprouts, fried chicken, lifting weights, training with Carl Lewis, hathayoga, pranayama. No way. They all lagged behind like a bunch of slugs.



Not a very happy state of affairs.

The mutterings of discontent began to reach the U.N. Head Quarters in waves. It grew into a raging debate. But why the U.N.?

The world was slowly starting to take a global stand. This allowed for much cross-cultural growth and richness. It also allowed for a lot of cross-cultural bickering. On the whole, the planet was rife with change and ripe with new possibilities for the human being — now at large all over the world.

But the Gods were stealing the show again. The ego of the planet was at stake. The Security Council met behind closed doors to ponder the implications of this unnatural threat to the collective human ego, and consider what steps might be taken. They pondered for weeks, until everybody got bored, so they reached a decision.

A letter was sent to God (Himself/ Herself) on a specially chartered space shuttle. The shuttle returned with the letter undelivered. God was not available in His/Her ordained province. He was rumoured to be hanging around on earth. A world wide search began. Finally, He was located near the Tropic of Cancer, on the road to Surat, eating peanuts and casually checking if the public toilets had improved.

The letter was handed to him. It said.



"Dear Sir God,

Of late, we have a problem with your speed. Even though a Security Council resolution was passed some years ago stating that the Human Beings now had monopoly over the entire universe, having discovered the speed of light and such like, you and your kind continue to disregard this and blatantly overpass our speediest rockets. This is not fair. We ask for justice when and where due. To discuss this problem we propose to hold a seminar on the subject — WHO WILL WIN THE RACE? — And its implications in Space-Time. We request you to send twelve delegates. We will also be represented by the same number. An unlimited number of 'observers' are welcome. The Seminar will be held at Geneva or Tahiti. Please indicate your choice of place and menu..." God said, "Okay, but it must be New Delhi. That's where the action is."

The messengers were dismayed. They tried to talk God out of it. "It's hot out there," they said. "Power cuts. Delays. Everybody drinks tea all the time. Phones don't work. Cows on the street. It's a bit retarded."

"I have spoken," said God.

Back at the UN headquarters, there was cause for concern. New Delhi had been refused entry into the Security



Council again for the nth time. Could the Gods be biased? That was dangerous. Then someone pointed out, "They never win in the Olympics." Everyone was reassured. God was OK. A letter was sent to New Delhi, and would they kindly respond immediately?

Kindly respond immediately?

They did.

Parliament was in session when the news arrived. A house member stood up pompously and said, "I told you so. God is pro-India, pro-our great national heritage, pro.."

The Speaker of the House interrupted.

"Not quite. I met God personally, and he told me he was Universal. Pro-clean toilets, pro-shorter tea breaks and so on."

"When?"

"At Surat."

"Liar!"

The House was adjourned. Schools closed for the day. There was great celebration on the streets. God had chosen to come here. What an honour! But suddenly it struck a news reporter from the *Indian Times* — What was God doing in Surat? Now? Next morning the *Indian Times* ran a headline: The



man with a mask — God spotted in Surat'. No one believed this. Everyone knew that God had since left for the Olympics to give Leander Paes a hand. He was also reported to be seen with Arafat in Palestine and was keeping an eye on mad cows in general, while overseeing the Disneyworld deal. He was also seen standing on the Rothang pass before a mountain of garbage left behind by tourists. One began to wonder whether this was all rumour. In any case, God seemed to be getting around a lot, and real fast. He was out everywhere, even before people could report him. This gave rise to speculation. Was God, one — A Royal Singular, or Many? i.e. all those others, running ahead. Was he, Him? Or was he all of Them?

A raging debate flourished over the next weeks, between philosophers, scientists and religious leaders. A lot

*At a special meeting held by the General Assembly, ex-Beatle Ringo Starr and tabla-terrifico Zakir Hussain were invited to pick out twelve names. It sounded harmless. The plan worked.*

of people were starting to get fed up with all the harangue. They didn't have a point to make to the Gods.

Meanwhile at the U.N. headquarters great tact and diplomacy was being employed in their dealings with New Delhi. It was a charmed moment for the Delhi bureaucrats. Files grew happily like rubbish heaps. The main problem now was how to choose the twelve delegates. There were 9870 names. Everyone wanted their own representative there. New Delhi said that since God had chosen them, they should have a major representation. The U.N. maintained that since they were the hosts, making the choice was their prerogative. The scientific community demanded its own delegation, since the issue concerned them directly. The Arabs said that if God was woman (there were rumours), they would boycott the seminar.

Finally, a solution was reached. All



suggested names were put together in a closed ballot. At a special meeting held by the General Assembly, ex-Beatle Ringo Starr and tabla-terrifico Zakir Hussain were invited to pick out twelve names. It sounded harmless.

The plan worked.

Then, all the rest of the names left in the ballot box wanted to be 'observers'. There were 9870 names inside the box. So the Security Council took off the zero and asked Ringo and Zakir to pick out the rest. 987 names, that is.

There was no tea break even.

The Gods meanwhile were taking their time. A reminder was sent. Finally word was received. They 'might' send a delegate, it said, since only one had agreed after much persuasion. There would be no observers. No one was interested. Sorry.

A snub?

The Gods, it seemed, were very busy. Doing what?

No one knew. In any case whatever they did, it didn't seem very useful. Why for instance had they made the world? It was of no use. What for? No one knew. While man had been slogging for centuries trying to find a meaning in it all, how it worked, why etc. etc. Billions of dollars had been

spent. And finally as they were nearing the solution, all set to establish man's supremacy in the universe, they found out that the Gods were running.

Ahead.

It was absolutely maddening. How did they do it? What did they have which man didn't?

So the CIA was consulted. Send out a spy, they advised. The Interpol was asked to network it's intelligence across the universe.

"Right," they said dubiously.

Well, how were they going to disguise a spy as God, the Security Council wanted to know. They stormed their brains. The light did not shine.

The Interpol came back. "It's not going to work."

"Why not?"

"Well we even contacted Bill Gates and Steven Jobs. God is not on their E-Mailing list, or anywhere on the Internet. Then we put some expert hackers on the job, but they can't break into the God network."

"Why not?"

"They don't use computers. Not even an old Mac."



"Retarded."

"We also found out that only Man uses this thinking machine 'with-a-mind' to network.

But the Gods use Man. A mind with a body. It's more advanced actually, I'm afraid."

The CIA chief had a flash of inspiration. A body — eureka!

"Miss World!" he said. "Let's send her. There is a Miss World from New Delhi again this year. For the third time. Maybe God is behind this? They are all sure to fall for her. I can guarantee you that. I did. Send her!"

"But isn't it too obvious? They will all know she's not a god."

"Precisely. That is the disguise, don't you see? They'll never guess that she could be a spy sent by us."

"Hmm..." Pondered the Security Council. They were always having to

***The Arabs said that if God was woman (there were rumours), they would boycott the seminar.***

take important decisions like this. "All right."

So Miss World was sent for.

When she saw the contract, she laughed. Not even a film right. How was she supposed to save the world at this rate? And not a single cosmetic hamper either. She was about to refuse when she read about her top-secret mission. Her funnybone cracked. She decided to do it for those poor deluded guys with white hair.

And so it came to pass that Miss World, rocketing around on a private space shuttle, looking for God in the cosmos. In the general direction of heaven. They were not to be found. They were all holing out on earth, she realised. Smart. She also thought that this whole spy deal was a gas.

She finally found one of them in Tibet, near a mountain, who told her to go back to New York. They were at the McDonald's on the street next to the UN headquarters. They knew she was looking for them. The gods were eager



to meet this spy.

She liked these gods.

She headed back to New York. Since there were no bushes near McDonald's, she hid the shuttle carefully behind a large neon sign on Broadway. From there, she walked, crossing in front of the UN building unnoticed, and entered.

They were all there. The attendant did not seem to notice anything unusual. Nor any of the others. There was a steady munch of chips and burgers.

She recognised them instantly. It was a joy just to look at them. They called her over to their table.

"Hi, Spy."

"Oh God!" she grinned. (Notice she addressed all of them in the singular).

"How's the job going?"

"It's a rave. Now, I am supposed to glean' your secrets as per instructions. So out with it!"

The gods liked her. The CIA chief was not wrong.

But they were wrong about how things would turn out. Each individual human being has a personalised information highway, which need not

correspond with the rest. Better security against hackers. So the Gods did in fact tell her 'everything'. But in a way that only she would understand. They showed her how the world worked. And Man. How the humans were all journeying through error and ignorance to perfection. Human beings would inevitably reach their own godhead, they said, but for this they needed speed. Inside. They taught her this speed.

It was marvellous, shattering and completely to the point. But she also knew that this knowledge was going to be totally useless for a) the Security Council, b) the CIA, c) the scientists, philosophers, administrators d) religious leaders, politicians and bureaucrats. In short, the Management.

It could help a few individuals, looking. Just looking, with a straight and silent question, from somewhere inside them. The gods who hung around, usually heard. And they would answer.

Finally they gave her a little note, to give to the Security Council. It was meant to be a clue. Something they could work on, if they really wanted to know how they, the Gods, did it.



Miss World read the note and smiled. Absolutely to the point. However, when she crossed the street and went up to the U.N. building, and walked into the Security Council room without knocking, and handed over the note, all hell broke loose.

"Those idiots!" bawled the chief scientist. "They always speak in riddles. They are impractical and irrational. They speak of things that cannot be verified."

He threw the paper at the Secretary General who picked it up and read aloud:

*One unmoving that is swifter than Mind. That the Gods reach not, for it progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In that, the Master of Life establishes the waters.*

*Isha Upanishad*

**Miss World read the note and smiled. Absolutely to the point. However, when she crossed the street and went up to the U.N. building, and walked into the Security Council room without knocking, and handed over the note, all hell broke loose.**

"Well, that's it," he said firmly, "if you gentlemen can find *That* we can beat the gods to it. No doubt about that. It says so here."

The scientists walked out in disgust. Miss World followed. But she stopped by the door.

"Oh, I forgot," they also said. "Forget about that seminar. Waste of time."

She left.

Everyone groaned. They had lost the race.

In New Delhi, the euphoria settled into gloom. The member of parliament kept his mouth shut and his profile really low. The gods were not pro-India only, it had been confirmed. They were just themselves, as and when and how they chose to be. It was tricky. Now God was reported to be



seen somewhere near New Delhi, playing in a forest once known as Brindavan.

Well it is quite amazing just what journalists will say and then expect people to believe it. Anyway, the bureaucrats suddenly found themselves out of the limelight. But for some unfathomable reason, New Delhi's request for entry into the Security Council was being reconsidered. The Gods were at it again.

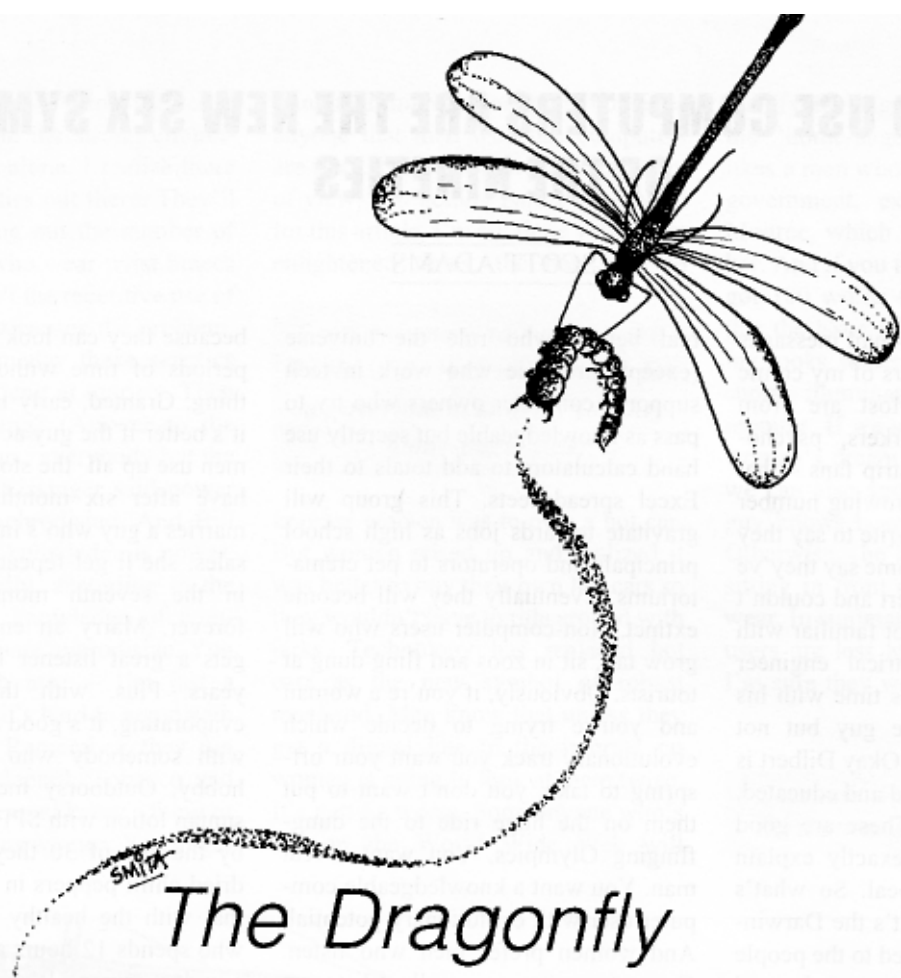
But people were not unduly worried. They were beginning to find out things on their own. The gods hung around. The people did not wait for press reports anymore.

Some were beginning to run faster. ☸

*Illustration: Smita Lohia*

*Anu Majumdar is a dancer/choreographer, musician and writer. She lives in Auromodel, Pondichery.*





# The Dragonfly

CARLA MUSCHIO

In the centre of India a hill rises, dominating the whole surrounding land. In the centre of the hilltop a *stupa* rises, crowned by four sculpted portals. The full light of noon gives iridescence to the wings of the dragonfly. It flies silently, tracing a regular curve. It knows where to go. It is carrying a grass-coloured dead caterpillar, holding it in its forelegs. The caterpillar is heavy but there is nothing abrupt in the dragonfly's movements. It confidently lands on one side of the north portal, where the sculpture speaks of the mango miracle.

In the whole world, only me and the dragonfly will know of the end of the caterpillar.



Within the short life of a dragonfly, this flight has the same significance of my whole trip discovering India, which is the noise of rickshaws at the rush hour, the Sadar Bazaar, Durga Mangla and Ajit, a time zone three hours and a half away, the downpour of rain, days and days at a train window, the editorial office of THE EYE, the cave paintings, the lost children, the walled citadels, Giorgio and Elisabetta, the calm in shady rooms, *accha, garam, apka nam*, the beautiful words, Bisleri water, a thousand oil lamps on the Ganga and the palaces in Varanasi, my beloved.

All in a dragonfly's flight.



While Parvati sets a lock of her hair, a world rises and dies.

(Written in Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh, August 1996)

Illustration: Smita Lohia

Carla Muschio was born in Milano, Italy. She is a literary translator from Russian and English. She has published a novel based on the Greek myth of the Minotaur (*Il disco di Festo*) in 1993. She is interested in human issues and the preservation of culture.

# MEN WHO USE COMPUTERS ARE THE NEW SEX SYMBOLS OF THE NINETIES

SCOTT ADAMS

I get about 100 e-mail messages a day from readers of my comic strip *Dilbert*. Most are from disgruntled office workers, psychopaths, stalkers, comic-strip fans – that sort of person. But a growing number are from women who write to say they think Dilbert is sexy. Some say they've already married a Dilbert and couldn't be happier. If you're not familiar with Dilbert, he's an electrical engineer who spends most of his time with his computer. He's a nice guy but not exactly Kevin Costner. Okay Dilbert is polite, honest, employed and educated. And he stays home. These are good traits, but they don't exactly explain the incredible sex appeal. So what's the attraction? I think it's the Darwinian thing. We're attracted to the people who have the best ability to survive and thrive. In the old days it was important to be able to run down an antelope and kill it with a single blow to the forehead. But that skill is becoming less important every year. Now all that matters is if you can install your own Ethernet card without having to call tech support and confess your inadequacies to a stranger whose best career option is to work in tech support. It's obvious that the world has three distinct classes of people, each with its own evolutionary destiny: knowledgeable computer users who will evolve into godlike non-corporate

real beings who rule the universe (except for those who work in tech support); computer owners who try to pass as knowledgeable but secretly use hand calculators to add totals to their Excel spreadsheets. This group will gravitate towards jobs as high school principals and operators to pet crematoriums. Eventually they will become extinct. Non-computer users who will grow tall, sit in zoos and fling dung at tourists. Obviously, if you're a woman and you're trying to decide which evolutionary track you want your offspring to take, you don't want to put them on the huge ride to the dung-flinging Olympics. You want a real man. You want a knowledgeable computer user with evolutionary potential. And women prefer men who listen. Computer users are excellent listeners

because they can look at you for long periods of time without saying anything. Granted, early in a relationship it's better if the guy actually talks. But men use up all the stories they'll ever have after six months. If a woman marries a guy who's in, let's say, retail sales, she'll get repeat stories starting in the seventh month and lasting forever. Marry an engineer and she gets a great listener for the next 70 years. Plus, with the ozone layer evaporating, it's good strategy to mate with somebody who has an indoor hobby. Outdoorsy men are applying suntan lotion with SPF 10,000 and yet by the age of 30 they still look like dried chilli peppers in pants. Compare that with the healthy glow of a man who spends 12 hours a day in front of a video screen. It's also well estab-

lished that computer users are better lovers. I know because I heard an actual anecdote from someone who knew a woman who married a computer user and reportedly had sex many times. I realize this isn't statistically valid, but you have to admit it's the most persuasive thing I've written so far. If you still doubt the sexiness of male PC users, consider their hair. They tend to have either (1) male pattern baldness – a sign of elevated testosterone, or (2) unkempt jungle hair – the kind you see only on people who just finished a frenzied bout of lovemaking.




I THINK IT'S  
THAT  
DARWINIAN THING.  
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AND  
THRIVE.

If this were a trial, I think we could reach a verdict on the strong circumstantial evidence alone. I realize there are a lot of skeptics out there. They'll delight in pointing out the number of computer users who wear wrist braces and suggest it isn't the repetitive use of the keyboard that causes the problem. That's okay. Someday those skeptics will be flinging dung at tourists. Then who'll be laughing? (Answer to the rhetorical question: everybody but the tourists). Henry Kissinger said power is the ultimate aphrodisiac. And Bill Clinton said that knowledge is power. Therefore, logically, according to the US government, knowledge of computers is the ultimate aphrodisiac. You could argue with me — I'm just a cartoonist — but it's hard to argue with the government. Remember, they run the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, so they must know a thing or two about satisfying women. You might

think that this was enough to convince anyone that men who use computers are sexy. But look at it from my point of view, I'm getting paid by the word for this article. I'm not done yet. In less enlightened times, the best way to

**Soon anyone who's not on the World Wide Web will qualify for a government subsidy for the 'home-page' less.**

impress women was to own a hot car. But women wised up and realized it was better to buy their own hot cars so they wouldn't have to ride around with jerks. Technology has replaced hot cars as the new symbol of robust manhood. Men know that unless they get a digital line to the internet no woman is going to look at them twice. It's getting worse. Soon anyone who's not on the World Wide Web will

qualify for a government subsidy for the 'home-page' less. And nobody likes a man who takes money from the government, except maybe Marilyn Monroe, which is why the CIA killed her. And if you think that's stupid, I've got 100 words to go. Finally, there's this the issue of mood lighting. Nothing looks sexier than a man in boxer shorts illuminated by a 15" SVGA monitor. If we agree that this is every woman's dream scenario, then I think we can also agree that it's best if the guy knows how to use the computer. Otherwise, he'll just look a loner sitting in front of a PC in his underwear. In summary, it's not that non-PC users are less attractive. It's just that I'm sure they won't read this. 

*Courtesy: Windows Magazine  
Illustration: Rustam Vania*







## JUST ANOTHER DAY IN 'PARADISE'

SUNITA RAO

*When children begin to believe that milk comes from tetrapacks and peas in tightly sealed plastic bags we are in big trouble. The process of disconnection which contemporary life fosters on us is about to triumph. If we further believe that this is an urban problem we are quite wrong. For, as Sunita Rao tells us, the beautiful Andaman and Nicobar Islands, that once 'paradise' is about to be transformed into yet another environmental disaster. And one of the reasons is that children there have little connection with their land, fed as they are with boring text books from the mainland. And teachers are no less inspired. This article is the friendly, chatty diary of an adventurer, so inspired by the wonder of natural life in the islands that it all ends up in a manual called **Treasured Islands** which she created especially for teachers.*



**March 1996:** Last week I learnt a valuable lesson in human behaviour. I was witness to a conversation between an esteemed Indian photographer on a *National Geographic* assignment to shoot in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and a colleague of mine whom I had invited to the islands during my recent stint there. It was a weekend morning and in between household chores my husband and I were able to put together the gist of what was going on. It was a phone talk and the esteemed instrument happened to be ours which was how we came in to

the picture in the first place. So Mr. Big Lens was bombarding I've-been-to-the-islands (IBTTI) with many queries — "How do I get there? Who do I meet? Where are the tribals? Can I do a whirlwind trip to visit all the tribal groups? Those vicious Jarawas stay in a reserve to which entry is not permitted? I see, but could I somehow wangle my way in all the same? Tribal permits — what are those?" To all these and other banal questions IBTTI was answering most smoothly and professionally (and often quite wrongly; then we would chorus the right ones from the background). This went on

for a while and my silent offerings of various books on the subject whose reference IBTTI could have mentioned



to the great man, were alas pointedly ignored. Finally it was over and we were told that one of the gems of the conversation was Big Lens asking what a gazetteer was, when he was told to refer to one. Colleague departed and spouse and I had some merry moments chuckling over how ill-prepared some people can come (even if it is from the *Geographic!*) and how they can unabashedly take up people's time, quizzing them about undone homework. It only struck me later about how my colleague had most tenaciously clung on to his exalted position of a half-baked informant (feeling very important no doubt that an international contact had been made) and not once explained his connection with the islands or the source of the background radiation of leads! While it was amusing to see this trait show up — I was reminded of my dog Kubla'i who single mindedly goes for any tasty tidbit that comes his way forgetting everything else — I also wondered sadly if more sinister and complex extensions of this little incident make the world we live in tick.

All too often, place, situations, and people are viewed clinically and from a what-do-I-stand-to-gain point of view that skews other dimensions. It could happen within ourselves and to people we like and trust. In essence, knowledge is power and position, and both are a ticket to various things in life one aspires for.



**March 1988:** It was yet another day for my MSc classmates and me in the mangroves and littoral forests of Chidiatapu, South Andamans. I was watching fiddler crabs, (whose males have one enlarged, brightly coloured claw that they use for territorial and courtship display) and recording their activities as part of a field exercise. Earlier, Rauf Ali, one of our professors had told me the story of Rudolph Altevogt, a German U-boat captain, who, as a prisoner-of-war on some island watched fiddler crabs to pass time and went on to write several scientific papers on them! I liked watching these ten legged animals darting in and out of their holes and

waving their claws. I also enjoyed wading through the squishy mud looking at other mangrove creatures, examining the catch of a fisherman, and walking through the rich inter-tidal area and forests. The immense strength of nature and its very vulnerability were both acutely palpable. There was no way I could put those islands out of my mind.



**Years later:** Thanks to Rom Whitaker (a well known herpetologist from the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust), I was back on those cherished islands putting together an environmental/ecological manual that teachers could use with students in schools. The Andaman & Nicobar Islands (A & N) are home to perhaps one of the most interesting mosaics of human societies and natural ecosystems. They are inhabited by six indigenous tribal groups, descendants of prisoners from the former British penal colony there, and a mixture of



## Another Day in Paradise

*She calls out to the man on the street*

*Sir, can you help me ?*

*It's cold .....*

*Is there somewhere you can tell me ?*

*He walks on, doesn't look back*

*He pretends he can't hear*

*He starts to whistle as he crosses*

*The street*

*Oh ! Think twice !*

*It's another day for you and me*

*In paradise.*

**Phil Collins, Rock singer**

settlers from the Indian and Burmese mainland. Situated in the tropics and being mostly emergent peaks of a submerged mountain range originating in Burma, the islands support a variety of habitats, each closely linked with the other — evergreen and deciduous forests, mangroves, beach vegetation, the seashore or inter tidal area, coral reefs, and the open sea.

The reefs and forests are very rich in life — in fact, coral reefs are said to be the underwater counterparts of tropical evergreen forests (rain forests). Growing in relatively nutrient-poor water and soil, they have evolved to become extremely diverse, rich ecosystems and support a teeming mass of life. Many human communities live in the rain forests, and others rely on fishery resources from the reef. Not quite coincidentally, the very health of a reef depends on the health of its partner rain forest. This is especially true in the A & N where most of the islands are hilly and the loss of forest cover (due to over-logging for example) results in exposed soil that washes with the rain down the steep slopes into the sea to choke and snuff out the very pulse of the reef. Tiny animals called coral polyps are the architects of the reef and the niches it offers to a host of other animals and plants say about 3000 per square metre is one conservative estimate!

Sadly, all of the above and many other interesting aspects of the islands — natural, social, and developmental

processes are often lost to the islands' students. Cramming from text books that have come from the mainland, children grow up without an endorsed sense of the local environment. Our main thrust through the whole exercise was to allow teachers to get a feeling for their surroundings and link it up with their lives and classroom lessons. If this is passed on to students more as an ethic or value rather than information, then links to the source of things can be built up and a tangible interest in conservation awakened. From Campbell Bay in Great Nicobar Island to Diglipur in North Andaman, we could only plant these thought seeds in people. Each group of teachers was special in their needs, outlook, and problems faced. Yet there was a common thread running through. Our discussions and the activities we did brought out something in them that perhaps was not possible before. Whether the effect will sustain itself beyond that brief slice of time spent together is yet to be seen as in any activity of this sort. More so, because we are outsiders to the system. Yet what could be seen was a strong, sincere exchange for the large part — we certainly left behind something of ourselves, and came back with chunks of experiences and encounters that have become a part of us.

I will never forget the snorkelling session we had for students and teachers at Campbell Bay. Not one of them had ever waded out waist-deep and stuck their heads underwater to see the riot of coral reef life and colour! It's as easy as that and they had not done it. So when they did, with the help of a jolly major from the local army base who is also an active member of a small group called Parirakshak there; — no one wanted to come out of the water. Masks, snorkels, and life jackets exchanged hands and everyone had a turn to ooh and aah. It was so easy after that to explain how the reefs protect the coast from sea erosion and why it was important not to blast them to extract limestone for road construction. Curiosity is something that is sadly

killed off right at the start of getting on the conveyor belt of education, and it has lost its credibility as an important component of learning. Just to see grown up men and women (not to mention the children) picking up shells, bits of seaweed, and seeds that the sea



*Students exploring the marvels of a shallow reef by wading and snorkelling.*

had brought in, examining each one carefully and asking questions enthusiastically was well worth the afternoon trip. And this is their home where they have lived all their life.....

In Mayabunder, without any electricity to have a slide show or screen a popular video film on reef life, we spoke for two and a half hours and encountered a lot of bored faces. Sure that the turnout would be poor for the afternoon's field trip to the water source of the town in a nearby forest, I



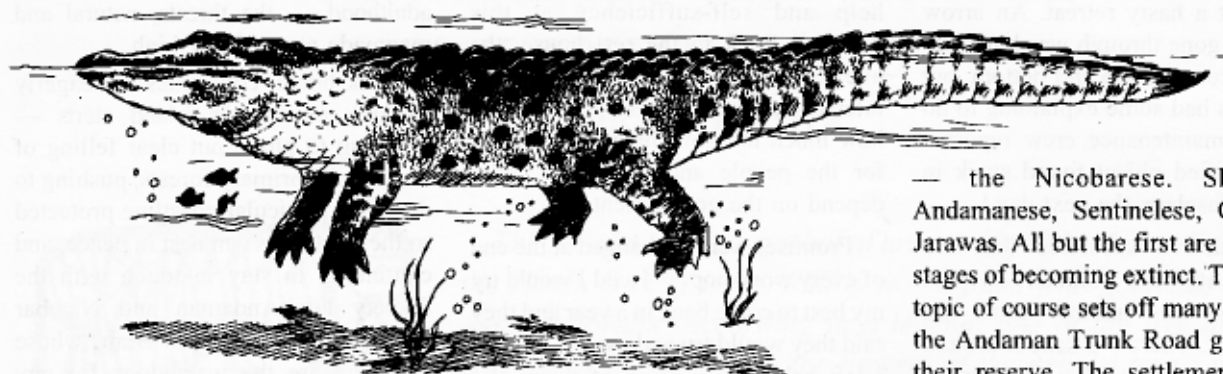
*Teachers travelling for a field trip in an open lorry — everyone was quite adventurous despite the potholes and wild turns!*

was surprised to see that nearly two thirds of the morning's largish group was there in the heat, crowding into the bus. Allen Vaughan, our guide, took us through open scrubby land that

was parched and the soil was cracking up. The cross over into the forest was sharp — here were trees, it was shady and cool, the earth beneath our feet felt soft and smelt moist and we could immediately hear a dozen bird calls. We came across huge buttress roots of a tree growing precariously on a slope as we were climbing it. One of the teachers said that was how the Jarawa tribals announced their presence — the Jarawa-telephone we called it! A little ahead was the giant seed of a thick, twirling climber called Entada. Each seed is round and flat almost like a potato patty (*aloo tikki*) and the pod is over a foot long. Coming across a dozen other things, we soon found ourselves at the source — clear, cold water gushing out from just below a huge tree and forming itself into a stream from where water was piped to Mayabunder. Everyone drank lots of the ambrosia and filled their bottles. The sweat and climb were forgotten and the water lent us a cheery, happy air, the way only forest springs can. And so there with the lofty trees, the canes and the cicadas, listening on we spoke of the water cycle and why forests were important as storehouses of that life-giving liquid. Again it was easy to explore a host of related issues in this setting. Everyone pitched in with little bits of information they had and the afternoon turned out to be one of our most enjoyable ones. Some of the women teachers said they would form a small group to go to nearby wildlife sanctuaries and experience the wilderness. A quiet man began to ask me about farming without pesticides and another teacher fixed up to come the next day and show me some degraded mangrove areas.

One very hot topic during our presentations was the issue of poaching — people regularly smuggle out red coral, sea cucumbers (*beche de mere*), turtle shells, crocodiles, sea shells, and dozens of other marine denizens that are displayed in people's drawing rooms or eaten in fancy hotels out of India.





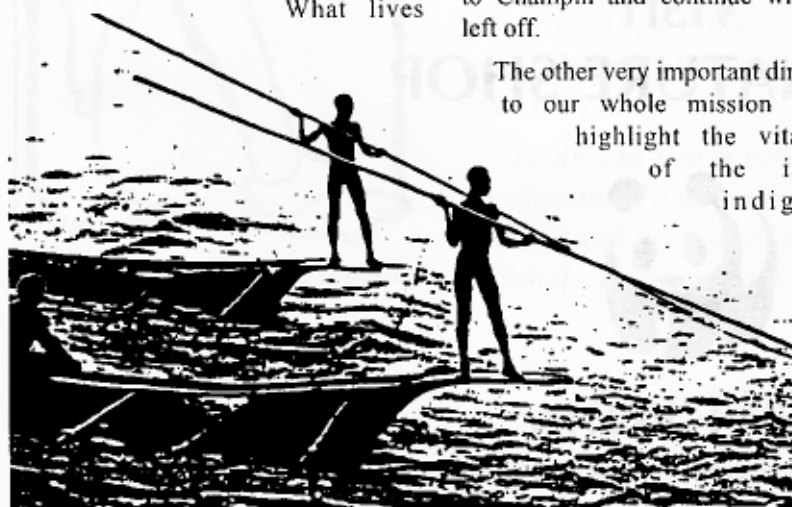
Thais regularly come in their light high-speed boats and make off with loads of this 'merchandise'. They are masters at speeding into and hiding into narrow creeks and most chases by the Coast Guard and other agencies are in vain. We had a heated discussion with one teacher group about this — they agreed that excess harvest of his sort was bad for the islands' ecology, but, did not quite see any way out. It was also difficult for them to accept how tribals were allowed to hunt and eat protected animals like sea turtles and dugongs, yet if others did it for a living it was illegal. One of the teachers went diving regularly, knew the best spots, and even claimed to deal with the Thais directly. He did not care about 'boat day', when the ship comes in and people rush off madly to the jetty to get their onions and potatoes. His poacher friends keep him regularly supplied with his needs. His argument was if he did not do this, someone else would — money wins hands down over long term protection of land and lives. What lives

do teachers lead anyway, he said. Underpaid, uninterested, worrying about transfers to Port Blair from the remoter islands they were posted to, trying to arrange for sick leave, lazy.... before the argument could erupt and not having time to go into the ramifications of the whole thing, we agreed finally that since this was



happening, it was all the more reason to sensitise students to the ill-effects of poaching, so at least they saw both sides of the coin, as it were. It ended there but I often think of that discussion and wonder if I can go back some day to Champin and continue where we left off.

The other very important dimension to our whole mission was to highlight the vital role of the islands' indigenous peoples



— the Nicobarese. Shompens, Andamanese, Sentinelese, Onge and Jarawas. All but the first are in various stages of becoming extinct. The Jarawa topic of course sets off many sparks — the Andaman Trunk Road grazes past their reserve. The settlements of the bush police have resulted in forays into Jarawa territory for petty thefts of honey and other forest produce, illegal felling, and sometimes the killing of Jarawa children. The fierce tribals counter attack as they have done for centuries. They have consistently faced hostility and repression. Starting with asking who the oldest inhabitants of the islands were, we moved on to jungle pharmacies and knowledge of medicinal plants, the rich food larders in the forests and seas the tribals have been using for millennia, their independence, the subjugation of the Onges and Andamanese. We suggested gently that perhaps they were worthy of our respect and were not the underdogs we have made them out to be. Watching a Nicobari *hodie* (an outrigger with sails) zip across South Bay in Katchal Island, in five minutes, we comment on the fact that the road takes close to an hour and ask if there is any point in planning more and more roads for the islands. Why not have sailing as part of school curriculum here I dream, and then snigger at thoughts of posh schools on the mainland advertising it and charging a hefty fee. One teacher sadly brings up the issue of exploitation — he has seen shopkeepers giving plastic bead necklaces to the Shompens in exchange for big bottles of honey. The army people bribe the tribals with liquor and tobacco to get what they want.

My favourite story is how some defence persons out on a regular sortie, flew low and close to the North Sentinel Islands where the hostile Sentinelese stay — this 'viewing' is apparently done regularly. This time though, the tribals came right out on to

the beach and shot at the helicopter which beat a hasty retreat. An arrow which had gone through was hurriedly sawn off from the top and bottom, but the officers had some explaining to do when the maintenance crew reported an unidentified object found stuck in the lower fuselage the next day!

The massive subsidies that are pumped into the islands by the government was another issue we spoke about. There's a school around every corner, almost. There are a lot of other benefits people can avail of being on the islands. Yet one common feature we found everywhere was the complaint that the government was not doing anything for the people and that they were really badly off. At one point we asked what the people were doing for themselves. Only one or two in the group accepted that the subsidies had perhaps made them dependent and unthinking about what they could do. I don't know if there was any point

talking about a certain degree of self-help and self-sufficiency at this juncture. Back in the rest house, the evening TV programmes were interspersed with election messages of how much the government was doing for the people and how they could depend on the government.

Promises were exchanged at the end of every workshop — I said I would try my best to come back in a year and they said they would try and use the manual I left behind with each of them. We spoke of having overnight nature camps, many children wanted to go turtle watching with us. We were lucky this time to see the giant leatherback sea-turtles come ashore and nest. Local interest at Campbell Bay in these ancient reptiles has gone up after the notorious ex-Lt. Governor visited there and witnessed the egg laying. Reliable sources said he even took away some eggs to eat for their supposed aphrodisiacal properties! Of the eggs

laid, less than 1 per cent make it to adulthood — the threats, natural and manmade are unfairly high.

Back home, colleagues are eagerly working on various island alerts — lobbying to phase out clear felling of the islands' primary forests, pushing to declare a particular coastline protected so the sea turtles can nest in peace, and continuing to stay in touch with the Society For Andaman and Nicobar Ecology (SANE) in Port Blair, whose members are the watchdogs for any eco-crimes there. I remember how a taxi driver and a forest department boatman had requested for copies of the teachers' manual if it ever came out in Hindi. Plans are afoot to work towards bringing out an improved Hindi version.

Vivek Gour-Broome (a botanist from Pune who was with me throughout the final six week trip in A & N for the workshops) and I made a pact that we should come back with like-minded friends to continue from where we had only just begun. And that is one of the few things in life I am completely convinced about..... ❧

*Illustrations: Treasured Island.  
Photos: Sunita Rao.*

**S**unita Rao works with Kalpavriksh, a Delhi based environmental group. She is involved in nature education in Delhi, the Andaman & Nicobar islands and Lakshadweep.



## VISIT THE NATURE SHOP



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## SALABHANJIKA - 3

### ASHOKADOHADA



A damsel under an Ashoka tree kicking it with her left foot.  
From Mathura, Kushana,  
2nd century Ad.

The Ashoka tree is a symbol of love and is dedicated to Kamadeva, the Hindu God of Love, who is worshipped with garlands made of Ashoka flowers. According to a legend, one of the five arrows of Kamadeva is tipped with the flowers of the Ashoka tree.

The Ashoka tree, closely associated with young and beautiful women, was supposed to have flowered only when its roots were kicked by the left foot, (*vamapadabhitashi ashokah*) adorned with anklets, at the conclusion of a dance. Kalidasa portrays a most charming scene of the awakening of the Ashoka flowers in the *Malavikagnimitra*. Malavika, the heroine, who is in love with king Agnimitra, performs a dance under an Ashoka tree. On seeing the tree she says: "So this is the Ashoka which wants the touch of my feet. It has not yet decorated itself with flowers". She dances and kicks the Ashoka with her left foot and remarks with maidenly pride: "This Ashoka would be too mean if it does not flower even now".

A popular festival known as *ashokapushpaprachayika* was celebrated in ancient India during the spring, when young women collected Ashoka flowers, decked themselves with gorgeous clothes and placed orange-scarlet flower pendants in their hair.

These themes fired the imagination of poets and sculptors. There are numerous sculptures in the Mathura and Lucknow museums and also in the National and Indian museums in Delhi and Calcutta respectively, where the Ashoka tree is linked to the female figure. They are meant to be good-luck charms and appear to have been deliberately carved on railings, standing gracefully, with happy and contented faces and arms raised in an attitude of touching or gathering Ashoka flowers. Behind them is invariably an exquisitely carved branch of the Ashoka tree, as if to protect the lovely damsel from the evil eye.

The Ashoka tree is believed to have the strange power to protect the chastity of a woman. Legend has it that when Ravana abducted Sita and took her to Lanka, she escaped and sought refuge in a grove of Ashoka trees whereupon Ravana could not touch her.

Prabhakar Begde

Illustration: *Living Sculpture* by the same author



# ANANDVAN

## THE FOREST OF JOY

SUDARSHAN KHANNA

*No contemporary Indian really needs an introduction to Baba Amte, a larger than life personality in the social history of this sub-continent. This article, however, focuses less on Baba than it does on Anandvan, his vision of a self-sufficient albeit handicapped community. The author, in his own simple style, recounts the wonder that he felt at this one man's dynamism translated into compassionate action.*

*"We can live without fingers, but how can we live without dignity and self respect"?*

**Baba Amte**

**A**nandvan is a fairy tale. This is the story.....

Near a small town in central India, over two thousand people live. Most of them are lepers but refuse to be beggars. They don't want to be outcasts. They have work and dignity. Together they produce everything they need except salt, sugar and kerosene. Together they own everything. The surplus production of milk, vegetables and textiles is sold to people in the nearby town. Many of the inmates of the commune have disfigured hands and feet but that does not come in their way. They make things of use and things of beauty. They are living in pucca houses with plenty of open spaces for children to play around in. Their homes are part of a huge garden with little lotus ponds and roses.

Fairy tale, yes, certainly sounds idyllic.....Except that Anandvan is real.

More real than our shanty slums on the one hand and the five star decadence on the other.

My first visit to Anandvan was some ten years ago. I had gone to visit a few development centres near Wardha and Nagpur in Maharashtra. I had heard about Baba Amte and the big leprosy commune that he founded at



Baba Amte

Warora town near Wardha. I took an early morning bus from Wardha to Warora. I got down at the Warora bus stop. It was the same familiar sight. Some makeshift tea stalls, dust, dirt and noise. Crowds of people flocking towards the incoming buses. We sat in a cycle rickshaw for some two kilometres and entered a huge open gate with a signboard which announced 'ANANDVAN'. But the signboard also had other name plates. A College



Anandvan — Entrance.

of Agriculture, College of Arts, Commerce and Science, a General Hospital and several others. The road was smooth, spotlessly clean and tree lined. Behind these trees, I could see a row of single storey houses. But where was the famous leprosy colony?

The rickshaw stopped in front of an office building. Someone took me to a house behind this office building.

But it seemed more like a small garden with a covered verandah — some sort of meeting place. Dr. Vikas Amte, Baba Amte's older son welcomed me. He was on his way to lunch and suggested I join him at the nearby dining room.

We sat for a simple Maharashtrian home meal. Vikas Amte's wife, Dr. Bharti and his mother Sadhnatai had almost finished their lunch. A few others who looked like staff members of the place were also about to finish their lunch. Baba Amte was not there; he was away in Punjab for the *Bharat Jodo Yatra*.

Vikas Amte deputed someone to show me around. We drove for about five minutes, passing a few houses, a rose garden, some large buildings, an orchard, some fields being ploughed and finally came to a dense forest area.



*Masonry work by inmates.*

I am told that just forty years ago, the whole area was totally barren and declared 'waste land'.

On the way back, I saw a man ploughing the field. He wore a white bandage on his feet and he seemed to be fully in command of the two bullocks in front of him. Two persons were digging the earth and doing brick work. A few were tending the rose garden. Some of them seemed to have hands with less than the usual number of fingers. There they are, I thought to myself.

The workshops were great fun though. Every building was surrounded by a patch of garden. There was a handloom unit that wove a variety of colourfully designed bedsheets. I saw about ten artisans, very skilled indeed. The missing fingers did not seem to matter at all. Next, the metal and wood workshops. Two persons were welding structures; a team of artisans was assembling tricycles designed for the handicapped. Metal cupboards were being put together. The work was the same as in any other factory anywhere in the world, but there were two differences. One, everybody seemed to be utterly and completely absorbed in their work to the exclusion of everything else and secondly, many of the workmen had disfigured hands. In the wood workshop I met a person with one hand doing finishing and polishing work. This workshop has a tiny museum of artistic lamp shades and art objects made of wood by these unusual hands. At the tailoring unit women and men trainees were at work. I remember seeing the work of a trainee who had

two hands but one arm. One of the hands was disfigured. It had two fingers and the hand was attached almost directly to the shoulder joint. Yet he could use both of his hands wonderfully well in

designed and produced by those same 'disfigured' hands. They had a range of bedsheets, durries, towels, readymade simple garments, shoes and *chappals* and leather bags. The quality of any of the products far exceeds its price tag. Sandhiniketan is supervised by Sadashiv Tajne. He has no life in his two legs but that has never come in his way. "Supervising people" he laughs. "Nobody needs any supervision.

I simply coordinate the work and some administrative tasks".

### ***Money can have feelings***

Opposite Sandhiniketan is an enclave. It has a cluster of houses and a large building in the centre. This building, a home for orphans, was named *Gokul* by Baba.

Some fifty children live here. Here is the unusual story of *Gokul*. We all know that it is relatively easy to raise funds for an emotionally charged cause. Baba Amte could have easily got funds to build it, given his reputation as a social worker. But he preferred a much harder way to collect money. Twenty lakh children from all over Maharashtra donated one rupee each to give their unknown child friends this building of love called *Gokul*. A number of houses are arranged around *Gokul*. This set of houses is called *Uttarayan* which are homes for senior citizens, retired professors, engineers and government officials. Baba has called this 'the wisdom bank.' *Uttarayan* and *Gokul* are housed near each other to let the obvious happen. Lonely old couples can build meaningful relationships with parentless children.

Anandvan has residential schools for blind, deaf-mute and physically handicapped children from the nearby villages and towns. School buildings and dormitories are designed with much care and concern for this special group of children. Again, open free spaces and gardens overwhelm the buildings.



*Working in the citrus orchards.*

all the sewing operations. The printing workshop provides on-the-job training for persons from Anandvan and from nearby villages. There was a greeting card-making section, with women, young and old, all engrossed in painting and pasting. Nearby in another room, Santappa Babu, a cured leprosy patient, fashioned footwear for special feet. Then there was also a leather bag-making section.

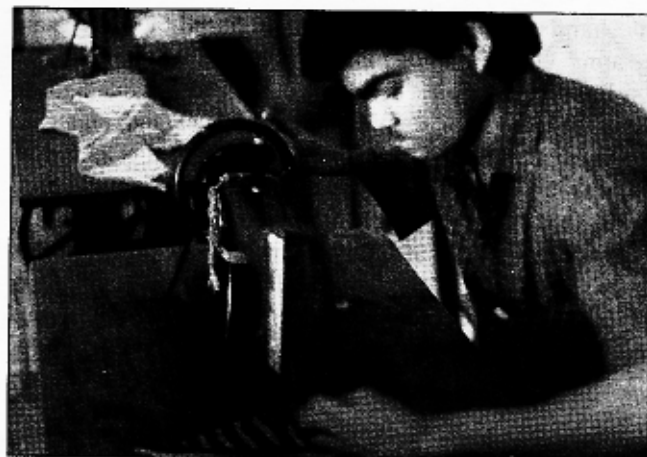
Dr. Vikas Amte has designed the buildings. Vikas has developed a new design for houses which are made mainly of sun baked bricks. The arch-roofed houses had a unique design.

***Behind the trees, I could see a row of single storey houses. But where was the famous leprosy colony?***

These also cost much less.

But, where, where was the leprosy peoples' colony?

We visited a house of opportunities called *Sandhiniketan*. There was a sales shop there, selling products



*Handicapped trainee with only one proper arm doing tailoring work.*

The Anandvan hospital is situated near the entrance of the campus. Many leprosy affected patients not living in Anandvan also come here for treatment. The Anandvan stamp is visible here too. It is neat and efficient and professionally staffed. Yet it makes you feel at home. A small garden and plenty of open space invite patients to sit out and be together.

I clearly remember a small incident. An old woman lay on a bed in one of the wards. She mechanically moved her hands to and fro. I was curious. She looked very old and very weak. Her wrist was as thick as my thumb. She looked as if she could go any time. She kept a basket of cotton by her side. With one hand she would pick up the tiny fluff of cotton and with the other she would remove the cotton seeds. Then she would put the cleaned, tiny fluff in the small basket on the other side. I was taken aback. Why should she be working at this age and in this condition? I asked the person accom-

panying me. He asked her. "I do it because I can still use my hands. What is the use of doing nothing?" She quietly answered him.

### **Anandvan can be infectious**

This half a day visit to Anandvan made me so happy and gave me a feeling of some hope for India. I remained

under the spell of this short visit for many months to come. Yet I did not go there for the next seven years. I had no reason to. What would I do there without work? For the last three years, however, I have started going there every year with my design students. Some of my fellow faculty members at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, where I teach, have also visited Anandvan to contribute something on behalf of NID.

### **Extensions of Anandvan**

Four other communes have grown out of 'the mother' Anandvan. At Somnath live about 500 cured leprosy patients. They cultivate seven hundred acres of land using modern farming materials. They provide the basic food for Anandvan and also sell the surplus in the market. There is a small commune of about hundred acres near Nagpur called 'Ashokvan' with about a hundred leprosy patients. It is also a self-sufficient unit. The Lok Biradari Prakalp runs the Nagepalli village project. It is a model village development unit. About twenty leprosy patients live here. They cultivate twenty acres of land. Jagan and his wife Mukta (daughter of ex-leprosy parents) have made it a self-sufficient unit through the sale of surplus vegetables, milk and poultry.

Jagan has also been elected the village *sarpanch*. But the jewel of Anandvan's extension units is the Hemalkasa project for the Madia Gond tribal community. Baba Amte established this project in 1973 for providing health, education and justice to the simple Madia Gond community recklessly exploited by sections of the business community and the bureaucracy. Twenty years of dedicated service by Dr. Prakash and Dr. Mandakini Amte have certainly created a change. If Anandvan is a fairy tale, then Hemalkasa is a folk saga of struggle and heroism. Each of these communes has its own unique character and needs to be dealt with separately.



*Handicapped students.*

### **What is Development ?**

Anandvan seems to have defied all conventional rules and clichéd modern management concepts. Baba Amte who established Anandvan and all the other four extensions seemed to have worked as a gardener. The communes work and work well in spite of the fact that its moving spirit has been on self-exile for the last seven years. He is now living on the banks of the Narmada River some one thousand kilometres away from Anandvan, and has vowed to remain there till the mega-dam Narmada project is reviewed with justice. Despite his absence, a community of over two thousand people



*Special shoes for special feet.*



live, work and resolve many day-to-day problems of survival and growth. Baba is away but his poetic quotations are often used and form an important morale booster. Some of these are:

- Work builds, charity destroys.
- if you have lost some fingers, make good use of those you still have.
- the partnership of pain can teach a lot. Do not ask how it feels to be hurt, experience it yourself
- sufficiency for all must precede superfluity for some
- give parity and not charity

Anandvan is not flush with funds. The reverse is true. It takes the toil of over two thousand people with or without broken bodies to produce for their basic needs. The donations received for buildings, equipment and projects is sparingly used, minimising the overheads to about one per cent of the total.

### *What is the core of Anandvan's development philosophy?*

Even after four decades of experimentation, achievements, recognition, Anandvan is too simple to warrant a definition.

- it is not an *ashram*. In fact '*ashram*' meaning 'no labour' is a joke here. Everyone works. Everyone can practice their own religions.

- it is not a 'leprosy colony' as it is commonly known. In fact it is taboo to use that phrase here. But, it is one of the most effective leprosy treatment and rehabilitation centres in the country.

- it is not at all based on the profit motive, yet every activity is geared to generate money and become self supportive.

- it is not a production centre. Yet almost everything of basic need is produced by the inmates.

- it is not a research and development centre yet everything, be it making new houses, a greeting card, cow cross-breeding or agriculture, is done with a scientific and pragmatic temperament.

The experiences and experimentations of Anandvan have exploded myth after myth about development. If a community of handicapped social outcasts and socially depressed individuals could do so well and achieve self-sufficiency, why can't others in a much better situation not achieve the same?

The other great contribution of Anandvan is that products produced by ex-leprosy persons are accepted in the market today and understood to be non-infectious. The local college building is the gift of the labour of these disfigured hands.



*Dr. Bharti Amte with patients.*

### *The tough but rewarding practice of sharing and caring.*

Say 'no' to nobody who wants to come. Say 'go' to anybody who wishes to remain at Anandvan. To say this requires courage, given all the uncertainties about money. Baba often mentioned that a society or a commune must experiment and function within the context of encouraging individual freedom along with common collective ownership. He has repeatedly said that he is not in the business of creating institutions but in helping build communities of individuals. Institutions are the by-products of this process. Parity and equity are the foundation for real development. Baba Amte often mentioned that every work no matter how humble, can be made into a creative act and that physical labour can lead to healing.

"We can live without fingers, but how can we live without dignity and self respect"? This may well be a pointer to understanding the real development process. ☸

*Photos: Sudarshan Khanna*

**S**udarshan Khanna is a designer and educator at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. He has authored a delightful book called *Joy of Making Indian Toys*, which deals with the design and development of simple Indian toys. Besides his deep interest in this area, Sudarshan is keen on teaching design courses related to craft sectors. He has headed many important design missions of industry, government and development agencies. He was given the National Award for Science Popularisation Among Children.



*From the left: Dr. Vikas Amte, Sudarshan Khanna and students from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, at Anandvan.*



## CHILIKA LAKE IS DYING WE MUST SAVE IT !

BANKA BEHARY DAS

*Chilika lake on the eastern coast of Orissa which is the largest brackish water lagoon of Asia, is dying. If immediate steps, both short term and long term, are not taken, it will face a biological death within half a century. It may exist as a big polluted marshy land and lose its importance for all time to come.*

Chilika lagoon has been designated since 1981 as a 'wetland of international importance' under the Ramsar Convention of 1971 to which the Government of India was a party. It is the obligation of the Union Government under that convention to protect its unique ecosystem. This obligation has been flouted at all levels. Both state and individual intervention are responsible in pushing this pristine lake to the verge of death. Because of the sharp deterioration of the lake, the Ramsar Convention's bureau has placed this internationally famous lake in its 'Red' (endangered) list.

This lake, which is more than 1150 square kms in area in the rainy season is hardly 800 square kms in summer and shrinking every year. The average shrinkage of the lake due to silt deposit is about more than 2 square kilometres a year.

The Daya and the Bhargavi, the main branches of the Mahanadi river flow into this lake. Besides smaller rivers and rivulets like the Nuna,

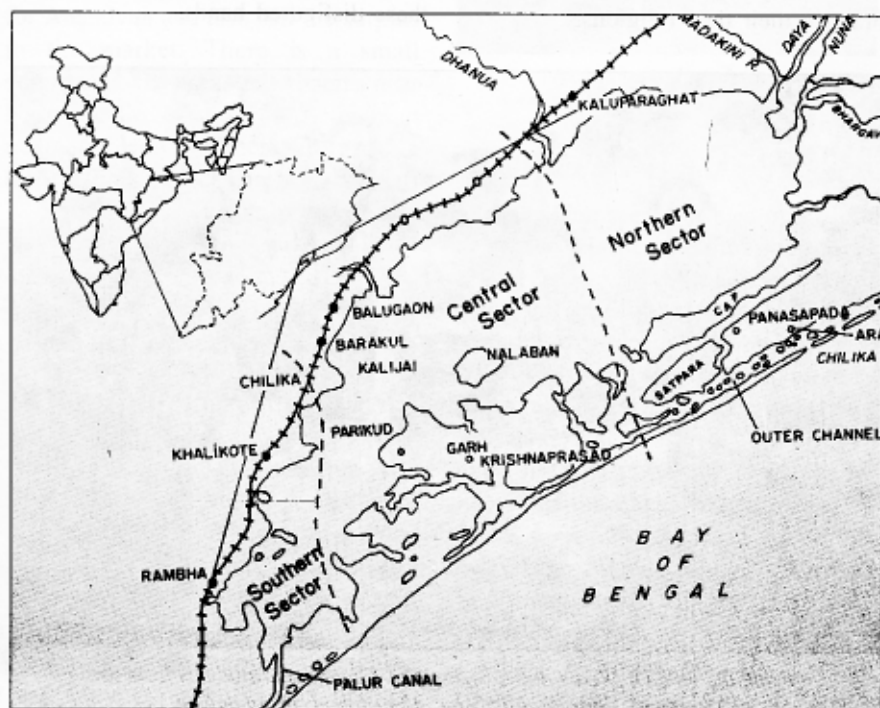
Kusumi and Salia. These rivers carry a huge volume of silt-laden sweet water to the lake. In earlier days because of the free flow of flood water from the lake through the outer channel that connects the lake with the sea, much of the silt flowed with the fresh water into the sea. But because of the gradual choking of the mouth (*mugger mukh*) and large scale obstructions for prawn culture in the lake, the silt is checked and trapped inside the lake. So the depth of the water is gradually decreasing. Because of the drainage of fresh water into the lake throughout the year and much more during the rains, the salinity of the water of the lake is gradually falling.

Effluents from nearby villages and agricultural fields also contribute a lot to the transformation of the quality of lake water.

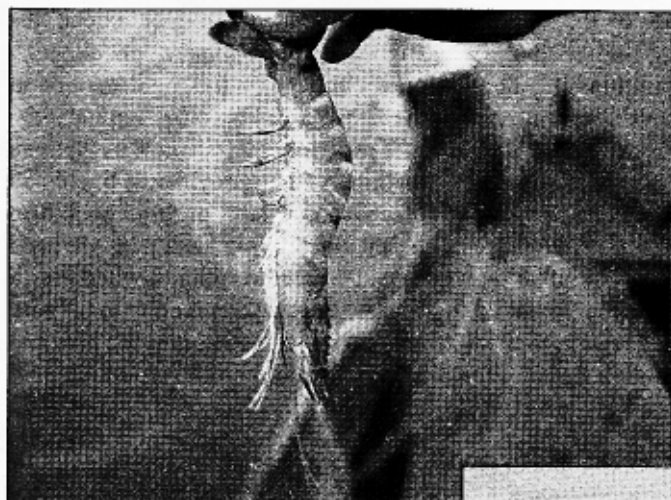
All these factors have a serious effect on the flora and fauna of the

lake. Brackish water species are gradually dwindling, and other species which grow in fresh water are beginning to appear. Fish resources are also gradually decreasing and catches of fish, prawn and crabs for which Chilika lake was very popular, is steeply falling. According to official statistics, within a period of ten years, it has been reduced to one third. According to the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), about forty per cent of brackish water fish species recorded in 1920, have vanished. Significant percentages of 'uro-hydal' or brackish water fauna have disappeared due to the drop in the salinity. There are about 69 species of fish as against 126 in 1920. Chemical analysis also shows variance of the Ph factor and reserve oxygen in the water.

Constant and increasing siltation of the lake is the major cause of its shrinkage and the lowering of the



KALIMISRA/CSE



*Prawn, commercially the most important fishery species in Chilika.*

depth of water level. Between 1920 and 1993, about 393 sq.km. of landmass has emerged around the fringes. Between Bhusandapur and Balugaon of Khurda district, the total land mass created during this period is about 46 sq.km. So the immediate solution to save Chilika is to allow the free flow of silt-laden flood water into the sea, for which all obstructions (prawn gherry etc.) inside the lake is to be removed. The long term solution is to treat the catchment area to decrease siltation.

Along with these short and long term measures, the *mugger mukh* or the mouth to the sea should be deepened and maintained properly for the outflow of flood water and inflow of tidal water. This is urgently required to maintain salinity levels.

Because of the all round deterioration of the lake the Nalabana Sanctuary within it, which houses the migratory birds of North Asia beyond the Himalayas (Tibet, Mongolia, Manasarovar, Caspian Seas and Siberia) in the winter, faces degradation. Nalabana Sanctuary is a marshy island of 15 sq.kms inside the lake where about 7 to 8 lakh birds belonging to 151 species, out of which 93 species are migratory in nature, congregate every winter to nest and rest. This is the biggest birds' gathering in winter in India, when entire north Asia regions are covered with snow. Chilika lake, because of its peculiar flora and fauna provide the ideal habitat for them.

Because of changes in water quality, the food chain is gradually getting altered. The Nalabana area itself is under water. Both reasons are impacting bird migration. Though the number of migratory birds that visited

place in the history, literature and culture of the Oriya people. Chilika Lake must be saved! It is not just a moral duty, but a constitutional duty too. Under the Constitution of India, all of us have a 'fundamental duty' under Article 51A (in Fundamental Duties of the Indian Constitution) to 'protect and improve' the natural environment. The State too is not exempt as we see in Article 48A (Directive Principles of Indian Constitution).

If we are to save Chilika we suggest the following for urgent implementation.

- Prawn culture should be banned in the lake and its fringe areas.

- All encroachments and obstructions should be removed. The outer channel, Dahikhia nala and Palur canal should be kept free. The dilapidated, abandoned Tata prawn culture pond should be dismantled.

- There should be a limit to the number of motorised boats plying in the lake, as their diesel and oil discharge pollute the water of the lake. They are also very noisy.

- The large scale catching of wild seeds of prawn and fish to feed the prawn culture ponds on the coast of Orissa and of other states should be stopped ruthlessly as it is the major cause of depletion of fishery resources.

- Afforestation on the neighbouring hills and waste lands should be undertaken with urgency to stop soil erosion and silting of the lake.

- A ten-kilometre buffer zone around the lake should be demarcated as a regulated area and economic activities in those areas should be regulated to stop effluent discharge. Plantation and anti-soil erosion programmes should be encouraged in that regulated zone. Hotels and other allied tourism offshoots should conform to normal environment standards.

- Palur canal should be further dug so that there are no obstructions to the flow of tide water and migration of wild seeds even in summer.

- A marine sanctuary for dolphins is a must as also for the recently discovered nesting-place of the Olive



*A day's meagre catch.*

the lake last winter was normal, they dispersed to the periphery due to lack of space giving poachers a field day. This was difficult to prevent.

Dolphins are another peculiar characteristic of the lake. They are from the Irrawady species which is highly endangered. In the earlier days they were found even in the southern part of the lake. Because of siltation, they are now mostly found in the outer channel and the neighbouring areas of Satpada village from where the outer channel starts from the lake to meet the sea at *mugger mukh*. The dolphins enter through this channel from the sea and play around in the lake. Siltation and obstructions by fishing nets in the outer channel threaten the migratory path of this lovely creature.

Chilika is one of nature's wonderful creations. It is Orissa's treasure. Oriya literature abounds in references centred around Chilika. Chilika lake has its





*A meeting of the Chilika Bachao Andolan.*

Ridley sea turtles near Prayagi to the north of the Rushikulya river mouth. This area of the sanctuary should cover the outer channel, the entire Chilika beach from *mugger mukh* to the Rushikulya mouth and a ten kilometre wide sea-ward side area along the beach. The entire area should be well protected.

- Immediate environment impact assessment of the lake by multi-disciplinary experts should be launched.

The Orissa High Court, in its judgement, in 1993, had ordered the last two programmes to be implemented. This is blatantly violated by the Orissa Government. It is sheer contempt of court by the state government.

### Medium and long term measures

- The dredging of the mouth of Chilika or the excavation of the earlier mouth to the sea should be undertaken after consultations with the Goa based National Institute of Oceanography and other international bodies. This will check choking of the mouth and also the free flow of flood water laden with silt.

- Plantation of vegetation and anti-soil erosion programmes on the banks of all the rivers that enter the lake to prevent silt-laden water from rushing into the lake.

The Zoological Survey of India has already drawn the attention of the government to the deterioration of the lake. They have strongly advised against prawn culture and pleaded for protec-

tion of the dolphins by establishing a sanctuary. They have also cautioned them about unplanned tourism. The Orissa High Court in its judgement of 1993 has ordered the immediate removal of encroachments by prawn culturists. They advised as a 'lesser evil', 'pen'

methods of prawn culture while prohibiting semi-intensive and intensive prawn culture. Initially, though the court was only concerned with the rights of fishermen and the government's policy of 1991 which divided Chilika's fishery sources into 'capture and culture fisheries', they subsequently went into the environment aspect of the lake because of *Chilika Bachao Andolan* (Save Chilika Movement). It set up a fact finding committee under Prof. G. C. Das to recommend not only the fishing rights of Chilika but also its ecology.

This landmark judgement has virtually banned modern commercial prawn culture, like the Tata Project which had started constructional activities by then. They were ordered by the central government not to go ahead with the construction until they obtained environmental clearance. Then came the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 1991 under the Environment Protection Act. Under this notification, the whole of Chilika Lake and the sea beach area of the Chilika Lake are included in the CRZ because it is subject to tidal action of the sea. Legally, an area of 500 metres landward side from the high tide line of the sea is regarded as a coastal zone and very limited economic activity can be done in that area and that too with government permission. So the policy of the state government to allow prawn culture since 1991 is completely untenable as it is violating both clauses of the CRZ. Legally, only traditional methods of fishing should continue. Therefore, the 1991 fishing policy of allowing the 'culture' method should

be discontinued. To that extent, the High Court judgement of allowing prawn culture by the 'pen' method in the fringe areas becomes redundant.

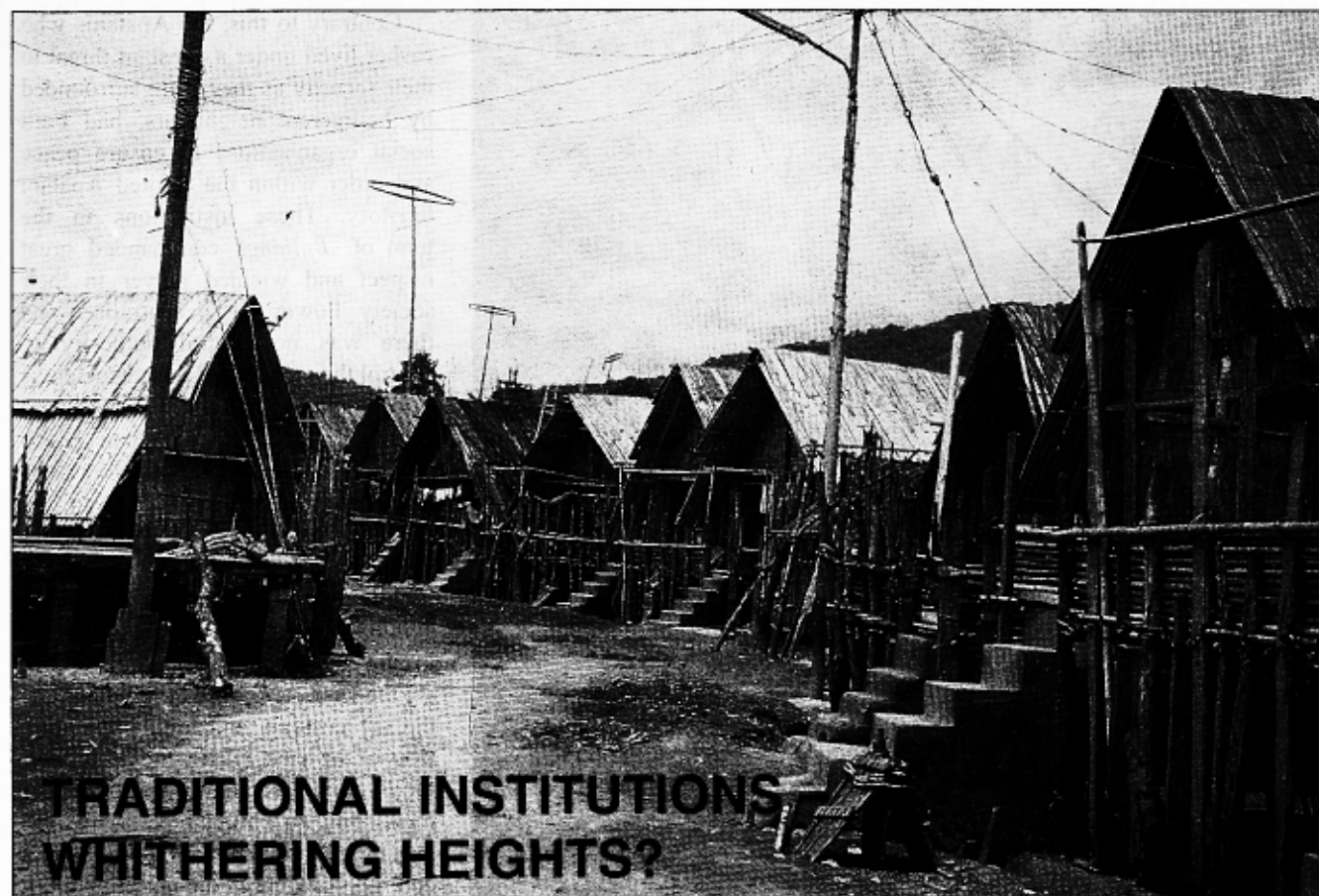
Traditional fishing has been marginalised, destroying the livelihood of about one lakh of fishermen who fished for a living since the Marhatta days. During the eighties, when prawn became a prized commodity for export, outsiders encroached into the lake and brought in a mafia *raj* which still reigns with the support of powerful politicians, high-level bureaucrats and rich businessmen and their relatives.

The Chilika Bachao Andolan and other environmental movements spearheaded by the Orissa Krushak Mahasangh (OKM) since 1991, stress on the interrelatedness of the environment and the livelihood of the poor and indigenous community. The Chilika Bachao Andolan sponsored by the Orissa Krushak Mahasangh has launched the second phase of its efforts to protect the lake after succeeding in the first phase of its struggle to throw out the Tata Prawn Culture Project from the lake. The lake must be restored to its pristine health and beauty. Our aim is to mobilise public opinion in Orissa and outside and spearhead a powerful movement to implement a sustainable programme of action. ❧

*Photos: WWF India.*

**B**anka Behary Das is the President of the Orissa Krushak Mahasangh and also of Chilika Bachao Andolan. He is also responsible for two other popular movements to protect the well known Bhilara Kanika Sanctuary and the Puri-Konarak Sea Beach.

Are you a concerned citizen or organisation trying to work against all odds? It must be lonely out there in the field.... Share your work with readers of THE EYE in our **PEOPLES' STRUGGLES** column. It may help you recruit more national and international support. Use us to reach out. Good luck with your efforts !



## TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS WHITHERING HEIGHTS?

Apatani houses with the *lapang* (on the left) — a wooden platform on which the Buliang sits for 'deciding matters'.

RUCHI PANT

*The author, who spent a considerable amount of time in Arunachal Pradesh, North East India, studies traditional tribal institutions of governance and justice and examines their position vis a vis contemporary courts.*

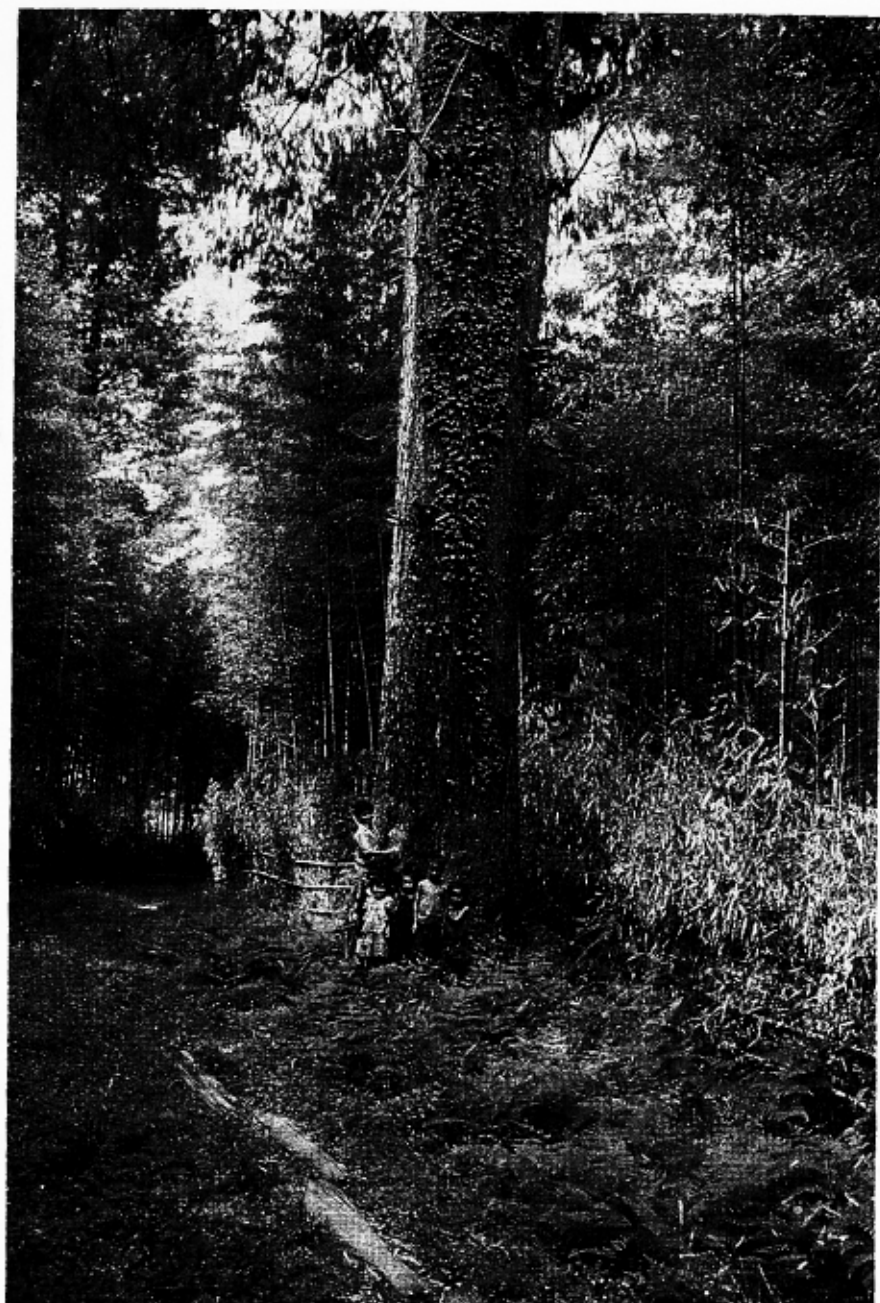
**B**y amending the Constitution under the 73rd amendment and empowering the local institutions in an effort to revive the age-old tradition of people's institutions of self-governance is an important step of the government of India. But how could these people's institutions possibly set things in order when natural resources are in a state of utter mismanagement and exploitation and when other political tools are in disarray? Conflicting economic and social interests are eroding the natural resource base and no amount of modern legislation is in a position to arrest this process of depletion and degradation. The judicial system, despite presently being equipped with a radical

and activist jury has not been successful in improving the environmental situation. Primarily because of its being overburdened, and more importantly, for having an inefficient and unconcerned executive to aid in implementation processes.

It is at this stage, that the news of traditional institutions being effective and successful in the area of natural resources management comes as a breath of fresh air. A two year stay in the predominantly tribal inhabited state of Arunachal Pradesh in the furthest north-eastern region of the country, has given me insight into the hitherto effective indigenous systems of conflict resolution especially in dealing with matters related to natural resources

management. Arunachal, the biggest state of North-East India, is probably the last stronghold of what can be called a good forest cover zone in the country. These forests too are no longer virgin, and have had to bear the brunt of rapacious plunderers. Despite Arunachal being accessible to outsiders only on the issuance of an inner-line permit, outside influence is all too tangible in the rapid loss of its forest resources. A major chunk of the forests in North East India fall under the category of 'Unclassed State Forest' which is under community ownership.

Traditional institutions in the past have served as organs of self-governance and these institutions were once responsible for dispensing all political, administrative, judicial, and cultural functions within their geographical jurisdiction. In other words, these agents of self-governance were also known as 'village councils' having different nomenclatures in different tribes. Amongst the Apatani tribe of the Lower Subansiri district in



*A sacred pine tree, believed to be planted by their forefathers is never felled.  
Apatani Plateau, Zero.*

Contrary to this, the Apatanis who earlier lived under a constant threat to their security as they were surrounded by belligerent neighbours, had built social organisations to ensure peace and order within the limited Apatani territory. These institutions in the form of *Buliangs* commanded great respect and wielded power in their society. Power was decentralised and there was no central authority to control their society. Apatani society is divided into clans and the clans are further divided into sub-clans. Each village is inhabited by four to five clans and there are eight villages in the Apatani valley. Each clan has a representative, the *Buliang*, who acts as the spokesman of the clan. The *Buliang* is given the responsibility of arbitration in case any conflicts arise. The *Buliangs* are the wise men of the clan, who know the customs and traditional practices of the tribe. Earlier the position of the *Buliang* was attained on account of him being an eminent person of the clan usually, someone who had wealth and status. Hence, the position often became hereditary. Though in recent years things have changed since the children of such eminent people started moving out of the valley for education and as a result are not conversant with their customs and social practices. In such cases, the clan collectively chooses another person as a *Buliang*. The *Buliangs* were consulted on all important matters related to the clan.

The *Buliangs* participate in the process of dispute settlement only when the dispute becomes a public affair and requires the interference of the community. The settlement is usually in the form of mediation. Conflicts arising in the form of boundary disputes or disputes relating to sharing of resources have been successfully settled by these tribal councils.

An important aspect that came to light in the field was that earlier, the social authority maintained by these institutions was so strong that they acted as deterrents to disputes. Fear of supernatural forces and religious sanctions were very prominent in their society. The traditional practice of *buning*, i.e. entering into lifelong

Arunachal Pradesh, this village council is called the *Buliang*. The concept of *Buliang* in Apatani society is as old as their settlement. The Apatani tribe inhabits a small yet fertile valley in the district and practices permanent wet rice cultivation. They are surrounded by the Nishi tribe on all sides and by the Hill Miri tribe in the North. The Hill Miris are considered to be the offshoots of the Nishis. A study done on the village councils of the Apatani and the Nishi tribes reveals that these bodies still play a significant role in the resolution and prevention of

disputes relating to natural resources management.

The composition and the formation of these councils again differs from tribe to tribe. In the Nishi community which is socially not very close-knit and is highly individualistic, members of the village council are neither permanent nor is the position a hereditary one. Instead, these councils, known as 'Nyel', are constituted temporarily to resolve conflicts and their members differ from case to case. This acts as a safeguard against the developing of an anarchical body.



relationships of friendship was a common way of preventing conflicts. A very stringent practice of oaths and ordeals was resorted to at times to resolve matters. Another practice of settling a dispute was that of a *lisudu*, where both the parties in a conflict try to resolve the problem by challenging each other and sacrificing *mithuns* (cattle) and smashing ornaments. Christoph von Furer Haimendorf, a renowned anthropologist, has called some of these practices 'safety valves' through which pent up ill feelings could be exorcised with minimum harm to the community.

One of the reasons for the success of the tribal councils in Arunachal Pradesh could also be the recognition these bodies have received from the state administration. Arunachal is a legally pluralistic state where not only customary and statutory laws co-exist within the same political system but there also exist two sets of institutions administering justice in the state. Arunachal Pradesh was under self-administration till 1914 when the British Government decided to form a separate unit of administration for the area and called it the 'North East Frontier Tracts' and placed these Tracts under the charges of Political Officers.

Under the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulations, 1945, the village councils were authorised to settle all civil and non-heinous criminal matters. These regulations are still in force, although the Political Officers have now been replaced by the Deputy Commissioner who has been conferred/granted powers of a sessions court.

In the recent past, the state has seen the precipitated degradation of its forests. The reasons are several but the main reason is commercialisation of forest resource. So far, forests have served as a life-support system for the inhabitants of this state, but over the last decade, the locals have also realised the economic value and timber has become a commodity which can be sold in the market. The taboos and other social sanctions which were once sacrosanct are losing their meaning with the influence of modern education and foreign religions. Many other

factors such as urbanisation, migration to roadside areas, government departments' (especially Forest Department) interference, inequitable distribution of benefits from the sale of resources, and change in land-use pattern, are also responsible for an increase in the number and nature of disputes regarding the Unclassed State Forests. In some instances it has been observed that the traditional institutions have been successful in handling cases relating to some of the new problems. In a Nishi case, where a person had started a mustard plantation, the Nyel



A *dapo* notice which serves as a warning.



Worshipping nature. Zero.

objected to it as monocropping is not considered good as opposed to a mixed and natural forest, for a balanced ecosystem. If we refer to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, we realise that it too doesn't allow for plantations on forest lands and it is considered to be a non-forest activity. In another instance of the traditional institutions' ability to cope with new problems — in a Nishi village, in a case of over-extraction of cane from a community forest, the Nyel took the decision that cane can be extracted from that forest only for bonafide personal use and not for sale. These examples are evident of the fact that these traditional tribal institutions are not dated and are quite dynamic in nature and can tackle the changing aspects of disputes relating to natural resources management.

There are some rare cases of non-

adherence to the decisions of the *Buliang*. No system of appeals exist in the informal sector. With the introduction of the state administration and judiciary, the party dissatisfied with the decision of the 'council' can approach the new institutions. If the decisions in an appeal case does not uphold the decision of the village council, and the case comes up to the High Court on an appeal, there have been instances where the court has reverted the decision of the District Commissioner in favour of the judgement of the village council.

There have been a couple of instances of 'forum-shopping' which means that the petitioner has availed of the option to choose the forum for the redressal of one's problems. It is upto the complainant to decide whether to take his matter to the traditional court or to approach the formal courts for justice. In a particular case, it has been seen that the petitioner has preferred to take his problem to the High Court instead of going to the *Buliang*. But the matter is yet to be resolved and it has been over a decade since the case has been filed in the High Court. So, most of the tribals here still prefer to go to their own courts as trial is speedy and redressal is instant.

Anthropologists have predicted that as time goes on, the traditional system of dealing with conflict resolution will become weaker. Parties approaching the formal sector directly are on the rise and the reasons are attributed to many factors such as power, connections etc. Will these institutions be able to withstand the onslaught of the rapid changes or the competition from the modern and more formal institutions in the long run? ❧

Photos: Ajay Rastogi & Ruchi Pant.

**R**uchi Pant is a lawyer who has specialised in Environmental Law. She has been keenly involved in several Public Interest Litigations. Ruchi also does field research for various environmental programmes. She is currently based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

# A COLORADO SUMMER

**T**his summer of 1996, after a whole academic year in UCLA's Graduate School of Architecture, I decided to take a break from the hot Los Angeles weather (which can reach surprising heights of over 100 deg. F!). The summer stop turned out to be Colorado, a beautiful mountainous state of extreme climates, and the holiday took many forms, including learning ballroom dancing, falling off from bicycles while negotiating bumpy mountain trails, ushering at out-of-this-world jazz concerts, and going on an ill-fated camping trip! But the foremost reason for my visit was a prestigious three-month internship at the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) located in the tiny town of Snowmass near Aspen (the playground of the rich and famous, and a world-famous ski resort).

RMI is an independent, non-profit research and educational foundation whose goal is to 'foster the efficient and sustainable use of resources as a path to global security'. I've been a research

intern at RMI under their Green Development Services (GDS) wing, which focuses on environmentally and community responsive development through research, as well as direct consulting services on ways to integrate energy-efficient and environmentally responsive design into specific projects, which include a sustainable town in Virginia, as well as the Greening of the White House and Pentagon projects.

As the only intern this summer in GDS, I've been involved as a Girl Everyday in both the on going projects the researchers are working on - helping with the layout, visual collection, fact-checking, glossary updating, making phone calls, basically all the irritating nitty-gritties that can potentially interfere with the researchers' real job, which is writing and going to conferences! The first is a book on green development, which is due out at the end of 1996. The second is an initiative to encourage more architects to design energy-efficient buildings. Let me say first that neither of these two projects in any way have required the use of my architectural designing knowledge. I knew in my heart that I did not wish to spend my summer doing mindless designs of California pop



**Young peppy Swapna Sundaram is an architect studying in California. Here are some 'Swapnesian' views on the cosmos.**

architecture in a stuffy blueprint-filled office, but I did wish to put my knowledge of architecture and development to a more innovative use. And I could not have found a better outlet! But more to the point...

While on the subject of green development, I guess you must be wondering - what does the term mean? Green development, in one sentence, can be defined as the integration of ecology and real estate. It incorporates financial, social and environmental goals, in projects of every scale and type, without being either a style, a trend or a vernacular. Structures and landscapes produced under green development are environmentally responsive, resource-efficient, and sensitive to community and culture. In addition, they are surrounded by benefits such as reduced capital as well as operating costs, marketing benefits, better valuation premiums, reduced risk of litigation and liability due to fire and other disasters, better health and productivity of occupants, and goodwill and community respect. In a previous essay, I had delineated the barriers to green building, but it is usually a widespread lack of knowledge and understanding by both the consumers as well as the building industry which has contributed to these barriers.



*Swapna sent us this original picture of Colorado!!!*

The second project, called the Performance-Based Fees Initiative (PBF), is a national experiment to demonstrate 'design incentive fees' that can help architects, engineers and building owners create extremely energy-efficient buildings. Energy-efficiency in this case would be described as high-performance in terms of the building envelope, as well as for the heating, ventilating and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems, natural and artificial lighting strategies, and daily water usage. The incentive fees hope to reward design professionals for what they save, not just for what they spend – thus aligning designers' interest with the owners'. According to this performance-based option, the client will pay a bonus to the architect/engineer if the building exceeds energy performance targets set in an initial agreement. However, if the building falls short of performance expectations after a two year monitoring period, the design team will pay a pre-determined penalty to the client instead! It naturally follows that this incentive hopes to encourage an innovative team approach integrating all disciplines, including the owner and occupants, through all stages of design in order to achieve exceptional energy-efficiency and its associated rewards. These rewards could potentially take the form of lower operating costs for the building owners, larger fees for the design team, and more efficient buildings for everyone. A building in Oakland, California, has already been built under the 'incentive' program, and four more buildings, currently in the preliminary design stage in different US climatic zones, are on the way. I mention this initiative because I feel that perhaps, with a little modification by sensitive architects, it could be applied to the Indian building industry too, leading to a much better built environment with superior indoor air quality in our polluted cities!

Well, enough said about my RMI experiences. But staying on the topic of experiences, I did find time in between my 'green developmentality' to imbibe the essences of Aspen in summer. Like many other skiing resorts depending on the influx of tourists for their income all year round, Aspen looks towards other ways of luring them in during the intense alpine summer, and this manifests itself in the form of rock-and mountain-climbing, horse-riding, camping, hiking, kayaking, river-rafting, and roller-blading expeditions for the sports freak. In order to initiate myself into this esoteric American cult ritual of sports fanaticism, I once mistakenly and ignorantly accepted an invitation to go on a 'short' hiking-cum-camping trip with a group of ten. The 'short' trip turned out to be over three hours, up what I felt was the steepest mountain in the world! Thankfully, when I thought that my tottering legs would not carry me up any further, we stopped to camp for the night in a pretty clearing. Unfortunately, I hadn't counted on the thin tents and thinner sleeping bags as sleep equipment, which offered my frail body little protection against the elements. Of course, everybody else's snores throughout the night further compounded my jealous misery! Never again, I swore later.... But happy things were in store for me too! For the culturally-inclined (of which category I am firmly a part!) the town has free concerts and ballroom dance classes all summer, in addition to a season of open-air plays, and a jazz music as well as dance festival featuring groups from all over the US.

However, my most enjoyable experiences have been whenever I hitch along the curving mountain roads (a thing I would not dream of doing in Los Angeles for fear of being either raped, mugged, or kidnapped!). I am probably the only Indian in this part of Colorado right now, and most of the ruggedly

gentle ranchers who stop to give me a ride, invariably always wonder out aloud about where I hail from. One instance:

So, What's your name? – he asks after about a mile down the highway.

Swapna – I reply.

After repeated attempts and a lot of spelling help from me, he finally gets the name right.

So Swapna, where you from? – he asks again.

L.A., – I reply deliberately.

Ummm, L.A., huh? But where you from 'riginally? – he persists.

India – I say.

India! (He stares at me with the greatest interest) I've heard it's like a furnace down there!

You must love this place, huh?

Well, it's cooler now in India because of the rain, and in winter, it does get cold – I defend doggedly.

I guess that means you guys put on some clothes then! – he laughs at his own joke.

After some time:

You speak good English, Swapna. Did you learn it here? – he asks.

Actually, in India we do have a lot English-medium schools in the cities – I persist in my defense.

No kidding! And all those poor people and all – he exclaims cryptically.

Well, I'll end here about this great summer of mine in this beautiful state of picture-postcard views and friendly people, a summer in which I've learnt many things and had many experiences. Finally, though, this has been a summer which has brought me closer to understanding this vast country's landscapes and people, and I know that I will feel more than slight regret when it ends on September 25th, when the final few months of graduate school in UCLA begin. So...here's to next summer!





*It is said that an ounce of sense contained in the **Panchatantra** is better than a ton of scholarship. Most of us are familiar with it from our childhood as 'once-upon-a-time' stories and have read them in abridged forms or in comics. Rarely have we encountered a literal translation in verse form. Indeed, these wise verses, often epigrammatic in style, go to make the real character of the **Panchatantra**. The stories are charming when regarded as pure narrative, but it is the beauty, wisdom and wit of the verses which lift the **Panchatantra** above the best story books.*

*The **Panchatantra** is a 'niti shastra' or textbook of 'niti'. The word 'niti' roughly means the 'wise conduct of life'. It is witty, mischievous and profoundly sane. The word, '**Panchatantra**' means, the 'Five Books', the 'Pentateuch'. Each of the five books are independent, consisting of a framing story with numerous, inserted stories, told by one or another of the characters of the main narrative. The device of the framing story is familiar in oriental works, as in the **Arabian Nights**. The large majority of the actors are animals, who have, of course, a fairly constant character. Thus, the lion is strong, but dull of wit, the jackal, crafty, the heron stupid, the cat, a hypocrite. The animal actors present far more vividly and shrewdly undeceived and free of all sentimentality, a view, that piercing the humbug of every false ideal, reveals with incomparable wit, the source of lasting joy. And this is how it happened...*

*One Vishnusharman shrewdly  
gleaning  
All wordly wisdom's inner meaning.  
In these five books the  
charm compresses  
Of all such books the world  
possesses.*

In the southern country is a city called Maiden's Delight. There lived a king named Immortal Power. He was familiar with all the works dealing with the wise conduct of life. His feet were made dazzling by the tangle of rays of light from jewels in the diadems of mighty kings who knelt before him. He had reached the far shore of all the arts that embellish life. This king had three sons. Their names were Rich-Power, Fierce-Power and Endless-Power and they were supreme blockheads.

Now when the king perceived that they were hostile to education, he summoned his counsellors and said, "Gentlemen, it is known to you that these sons of mine, being hostile to education, are lacking in discernment. So when I behold them, my kingdom brings me no happiness, though all external thorns are drawn. For there is wisdom in the proverb:

*Of sons unborn, or dead, or fools,  
Unborn or dead will do:*

*They cause a little grief, no doubt;  
But fools, a long life through.*

and again:

*To what good purpose can a cow  
That brings no calf nor  
milk be bent?*

*Or why beget a son who proves  
A dunce and disobedient?*

Some means must therefore be devised to awaken their intelligence."

And they, one after another, replied, "O King, first one learns grammar, in twelve years. If this subject has somehow been mastered, then one masters the books on religion and practical life. Then the intelligence awakens."

But one of their number, a counsellor named Keen said: "O King, the duration of life is limited, and the verbal sciences require much time for mastery. Therefore let some kind of epitome be devised to wake their intelligence. There is a proverb that says:

*Since verbal sciences  
have no final end,*

*Since life is short, and  
obstacles impend,  
Let central facts be picked and  
firmly fixed  
As swans extract the milk  
with water mixed.*

"Now, there is a Brahmin here named Vishnusharman, with a reputation for competence in numerous sciences. Entrust the princes to him. He will certainly make them intelligent in a twinkling."

When the king had listened to this, he summoned Vishnusharman and said, "Holy sir, as a favour to me you must make these princes incomparable masters of the art of practical life. In return, I will bestow upon you a hundred land grants."

And Vishnusharman made this answer to the king, "O King, listen. Here is the plain truth. I am not the man to sell good learning for a hundred land grants. But if I do not, in six months' time, make the boys acquainted with the art of intelligent living, I will give up my own name. Let us cut the matter short. Listen to my lion roar. My boasting arises from no greed for cash. Besides, I have no use for money; I am eighty years old, and all the objects of sensual desire have lost their charm. But in order that your request may be granted, I will show a sporting spirit with reference to artistic matters. Make a note of the date. If I fail to render your sons, in six months' time, incomparable masters of the art of intelligent living, then His Majesty is at liberty to show me His Majestic bare bottom."

When the king, surrounded by his counsellors, had listened to the Brahmin's highly unconventional promise, he was dumbstruck. He entrusted the princes to him, and experienced supreme content.

Meanwhile, Vishnusharman took the boys, went home, and made them learn by heart, five books which he composed and called

- (i) *The Loss of Friends*
- (ii) *The Winning of Friends*
- (iii) *Crows and Owls*
- (iv) *Loss of Gains*
- (v) *Ill-considered Action.*

These the princes learned, and in six months' time they answered the prescription. Since that day this work on the art of intelligent living, called the *Panchatantra*, or the Five Books, has travelled the world, aiming at awakening the intelligence in the young.

## THE STORY OF THE LAST EPISODE

Constance tells her husband Sprawl the plover the story of Shell-Neck the turtle who perished due to foolish thinking. After illustrating her advice with a story, Constance narrates another one about three fishes, Forethought, Readywit and Fatalist. The fishes lived in a lake which was soon to be menaced by fishermen. To avert the danger, Forethought left the lake, Readywit tricked the fishermen by feigning death but Fatalist died clinging to what he thought was the inevitability of destiny. Constance's advice fell on deaf ears as her husband Sprawl the plover continued to tempt fate by insisting that she lay her eggs on the shore. But the ocean, in order to puncture his self-conceit, swallowed the eggs. The enraged plover decided to drain the ocean with his bill. The wife plover was convinced that this was well nigh impossible. She cautioned her husband saying that if he must proceed with this foolish act, he should at least enlist the help of the other birds. For:

*"Woodpecker and sparrow  
With froggy and gnat,  
Attacking en masse, laid  
The elephant flat"*

"How was that?", asked Sprawl. And Constance told the story of THE DUEL BETWEEN ELEPHANT AND SPARROW.

## THE DUEL BETWEEN ELEPHANT AND SPARROW



In a dense bit of jungle lived a sparrow and his wife, who had built their nest on the branch of a tamal tree, and in course of time a family appeared.

Now one day, a jungle elephant with the spring fever was distressed by the heat, and came beneath that tamal tree in search of shade. Blinded by his fever, he pulled with the tip of his trunk at the branch where the sparrows had their nest, and broke it. In the process, the sparrows' eggs were crushed, though the parent-birds — further life being predestined — barely escaped death.

Then the hen-sparrow lamented, desolate with grief at the death of her chicks. And presently, hearing her lamentation, a woodpecker bird, a great friend of hers, came grieved at her grief, and said, "My dear friend, why lament in vain? For the Scripture says:

*For lost and dead and past  
The wise have no laments:  
Between the wise and fools  
Is just this difference.*

And again:

*No life deserves lament;  
Fools borrow trouble,  
Add sadness to the sad,  
So make it double.*

And yet again:

*Since kinsmen's sticky tears  
Clog the departed,  
Bury them decently,  
Tearless, whole-hearted."*

"That is good doctrine," said the hen-sparrow, "but what of it? This elephant — curse his spring fever — killed my babies. So if you are my friend, think of some plan to kill this big elephant. If that were done, I should feel less grief at the death of my children. You know the saying:

*While one brings comfort in distress,  
Another jeers at pain;  
By paying both as they deserve,  
A man is born again."*



"Madam," said the woodpecker, "your remark is very true. For the proverb says:

*A friend in need is a friend indeed,  
Although of different caste;  
The whole world is your eager friend  
So long as riches last.*

And again:

*A friend in need is a friend indeed;  
Fathers indeed are those who feed;  
True comrades they, and wives  
indeed,  
Whence trust and sweet content  
proceed.*

"Now see what my wit can device. But you must know that I, too, have a friend, a gnat called Lute-Buzz. I will return with her, so that this villainous beast of an elephant may be killed."

So he went with the hen-sparrow, found the gnat, and said: "Dear madam, this is my friend the hen-sparrow. She is mourning because a villainous elephant smashed her eggs. So you must lend your assistance while I work out a plan for killing him."

"My good friend," said the gnat, "there is only one possible answer. But I also have a very intimate friend, a frog named Cloud-Messenger. Let us do the right thing by calling him into consultation. For the proverb says:

*A wise companion find,  
Shrewd, learned, righteous, kind:  
For plans by him designed  
Are never undermined."*

So all three went together and told Cloud-Messenger the entire story. And

the frog said, "How feeble a thing is that wretched elephant when pitted against a great throng enraged! Gnat, you must go and buzz in his fevered ear, so that he may shut his eyes in delight, hearing your music. Then the woodpecker's bill will peck out his eyes. After that I will sit on the edge of a pit and croak. And he, being thirsty, will hear me, and will

approach expecting to find a body of water. When he comes to the pit, he will fall in and perish."

When they carried out the plan, the fevered elephant shut his eyes in delight at the song of the gnat, was blinded by the woodpecker, wandered thirst-smitten at noonday, followed the croak of a frog, came to a great pit, fell in, and died.

*"And that is why I say:  
Woodpecker and sparrow,....  
and the rest of it."*

"Very well," said the plover. "I will assemble my friends and dry up the ocean." With this in mind, he summoned all the birds and related his grief at the rape of his chicks. And they started to beat the ocean with their wings, as a means of bringing relief to his sorrow.

But one bird said, "Our desires will not be accomplished in this manner. Let us rather fill up the ocean with clods and dust." So they all brought what clods and dust they could carry in the hollow of their bills and started to fill up the ocean.

Then another bird said, "It is plain that we are not equal to a contest with mighty

ocean. So I will tell you what is now timely. There is an old gander who lives beside a banyan tree, who will give us sound and practical advice. Let us go and ask him. For there is a saying:

*Take old folks' counsel (those are old  
Who have experience)  
The captive wild-goose flock was  
freed  
By old gander's sense."*

"How was that?" asked the birds. And the speaker told the story of

## THE SHREWD OLD GANDER

In a part of a forest was a fig tree with massive branches. In it lived a flock of wild geese. At the root of this tree appeared a creeping vine of the species called *koshambi*. Thereupon the old gander said, "This vine that is climbing our fig tree bodes ill to us. By means of it, someone might perhaps climb up here some day and kill us. Take it away while it is still slender and readily cut." But the geese despised his counsel and did not cut the vine, so that in course of time it wound its way up the tree.





Now one day when the geese were out foraging, a hunter climbed the fig tree by following the spiral vine, laid a snare among the nests, and went home. When the geese, after food and recreation, returned at nightfall, they were caught to the last one. Whereupon the old gander said, "Well, the disaster has taken place. You are caught, having brought it on yourselves by not heeding my advice. We are all lost now."

Then the geese said to him, "Sir, the thing having come to pass, what ought we to do now? And the old fellow replied, "If you will take my advice,

play dead when that hateful hunter comes. And when the hunter, inferring that we are dead, throws the last one to the ground, we then must all rise simultaneously, flying over his head."

At early dawn the hunter arrived, and when he looked them over, everyone seemed as good as dead. He therefore freed them from the snare with perfect assurance, and threw them all to the ground, one after the other. But when they saw him preparing to descend, they all followed the shrewd plan of the old gander and flew up simultaneously

"And that is why I say:

*'Take old folks' counsel, . . . and the rest of it.'*"

When the story had been told, all the birds visited the old gander and related their grief at the rape of the chicks. Then the old gander said, "The king of us all is Garuda. Therefore, the timely course of action is this. You must all stir the feelings of Garuda by a chorus of wailing lamentation. In consequence, he will remove our sorrow." With this purpose they sought Garuda.

Now Garuda had just been summoned by blessed Vishnu to take part in an impending battle between gods and demons. At just this moment the birds reported to their master, the king of the birds, what sorrow in the separation of loved ones had been wrought by the ocean when he seized the chicks. "O bird divine," they said, "while you gleam in royal radiance, we must live on what little is won by the labor of our bills. Because of our weak necessity of eating, the ocean has, in over-bearing manner, carried away our young. Now there is a saying:

*The poor are in peculiar need  
Of being secret when they feed:  
The lion killed the ram who could  
Not check his appetite for food."*

"How was that?" asked Garuda. And an old bird told the story of *The Lion and the Ram*.

*(To be continued.....)*

Illustrations: Oroon

*In 1924, Arthur W. Ryder, the well known American oriental scholar translated the Panchatantra from Sanskrit to English. It is one of the best of existing translations in any foreign language. The text translated here dates back from the year 1199 A.D. We are happy to serialise and present the Panchatantra, interspersing verse and prose as translated by Ryder and published by Jaico.*



# DIMINISHING RELATIONSHIPS

ANUPA LAL

Three words that have always made me very uncomfortable are "drop in sometime." They seem to me to ooze insincerity. Woe betide the foolish person who takes them seriously and actually drops in, with or — heaven help him — without warning! He is not likely to repeat his mistake.

Why, if they are not meant, are these words uttered so often? Just to round off another evening of superficial conversation? After all, what else can one say to people one doesn't really intend to see again?

Each of us has to work out his or her answer to that question. But why say "drop in sometime" if you don't mean it?

These three words are a pointer to the emptiness and superficiality of so much of our social interaction. The absurdly named cocktail party epitomizes this, consisting as it does, more often than not, of inanities exchanged, interrupted, resumed with some-one else and interrupted again.

I am sure cocktail parties must serve several purposes. The host can return, at one fell swoop, the hospitality he owes to many people. He can also demonstrate how wide and varied his circle is! The invitees can meet lots of other influential, powerful, decorative people like themselves under one roof, thus saving both time and money. So who's complaining?

Anyone who is dissatisfied by this kind of social interaction. Anyone who doesn't like being abandoned in the middle of a sentence in favour of someone more important. Anyone who dislikes the same dreary, size-them-up small-talk made by a succession of strangers — Where d'you live? What do you do? What does your husband or wife do?

Why, someone might well ask, am I looking for solidity in fluidity? Cocktail parties are hardly places to build and nurture human relationships. You don't really make contact with people at such get-togethers. You merely make

contacts i.e. likely-to-be-useful acquaintances.

Cocktail parties are only one manifestation of a malady that seems to afflict most 'haves', perched precariously on the dizzying merry-go-round of modern urban life. This malady is an increasing inability to sustain relationships, except in a superficial and selfish way. No man is an island, said the poet John Donne. Sadly, today most of us are tending to become just that — islands.

This modern malady strikes early. Parents in fast forward mode tend to produce nervous, lonely, insecure children. Trying to fast forward



GURANOO SINGH

childhood can and does have disastrous consequences. What children want from their parents — above all else — is their time and their undivided loving attention. Not all the toys in the world can make up for the lack of these.

When children are neglected during early childhood, for whatever reason, when their emotional needs are not met, their ability to form relationships can be impaired for life. In the give and take of a relationship, such children know only how to take, not how to give. To be able to give, you must first have received.

The years spent getting an education provide ample opportunity for most children to form lasting relationships. As competition increases however, the desire to share comes into conflict with the desire to conceal, emptying the relationship of much of its warmth and sincerity.

After the switch from learning to earning, when the desire and the need to do well for oneself and one's family are paramount, most relationships formed are based on convenience, nothing more, nothing deeper. You scratch my back. I scratch yours. Quid pro quo. You stop. I stop.

One would like to think of the family as a haven of love and understanding, immune to the pressures of the outside world. It is not, nor can it be so. The hungry monster of modernity is already nibbling at the edges of family life as we knew it. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins are no longer central to the family as it shrinks and goes nuclear. They are at best welcomed and accommodated; at worst — resented and ignored.

The pressures of modern living are beginning to tell on the nuclear family too, most tragically on children, as we have already seen. How to balance the needs of their children with their own need to get ahead is a major dilemma for parents.

Independence, individuality, doing your own thing — how important these laudable concepts are for us today! And yet how imperceptibly they can take us towards isolation and sterility.

As much, if not more, than his need for privacy is man's need to connect himself with others in a deep and mutually satisfying way. In the hurry and worry of modern life, he finds this increasingly harder to do. Frustrated, confused, he turns to the myriad distractions and compensations that a technologically advanced society offers. But the unease remains, expressing itself in sickness, anti-social behaviour and other tragic excesses.

Our world is shrinking, thanks to modern technology. But surely the shrinking of the world need not be accompanied by the shrinking and atrophying of the human heart? ☞

*Anupa Lal has been writing for the last twenty five years. She has authored several books for children as well as poems, stories and articles for leading periodicals, both in India and abroad.*



The last elections must have been the quietest elections ever. Also, the most civilized. And to think it takes only one man, a bald — one at that, to

ensure this happened. Never too late to change. He happens to be associated with a breed, the Alsatian, which is known for its steadfast loyalty and ferociousness. Perhaps the apt word is ferocious loyalty — to his principles, in case of Thiru Seshan.

*Amma, Dekh tera munda bigda jaye....* PVNR, our former Prime Minister, our own Chanakya, the Rama of Scamayana, the original cat with nine lives, could not out-Machiaevelli Her (of the large frame, mother of the Tamils). She is actually PM material. With her wide 'out-reach', and her *choli-ke-neechea-kya-hai* look, she is the ultimate hope for the Weight Non-Watchers Society of India. She carelessly throws it around in the hope that such a disbursement may help. Poor PVNR! There is no dithering anymore....the CBI means business.

What can help this country is new thinking. There is this new party called the Satya Marg Party. At first I thought it was named after a posh road in the Chankayapuri area, of New Delhi, where many 'un-satya' folks reside (read bureaucrats, artocrats and just rats!). But this is a party pursuing the 'path of truth'. Poor Buddha, with his MTV locks, even he left it all to seek enlightenment, without the help of the Satya Marg Party.

Zap to DD-CNN Round Table programme on Conservation initiated by Vir Sanghvi. The panelists — Patwant Singh, crusader for a cleaner Delhi; Jyotindra Jain, crusader for crafts; Abhishek Manu Singhvi, crusader for crusades; Romi Chopra, crusader and maintainer of official graves; Ashok Vajpeyi, crusader against crusaders, Ritu Beri, crusader against crusaders against fashion folks who use historic monuments as backdrops and poor me, a crusader with no

# 10° SQUINT

**ASHISH KHOKAR**

*A column inspired by a school of ancient Greek philosophers founded by Antisthenes, popularly known as the School of Cynics. THE EYE places, amidst bundles of hope and idealism, one such cynic who will bash at... well everything. We hope this column appeals to the diehard cynic who woke up in the morning, stubbed his toe and hated the world. The writer's views (which are expressed in a rather humorous tone) are his own (although we secretly agree with most of them).*

crusade — assembled in the Central Production Centre of Doordarshan in Asiad Siri Village — to discuss the conservation of 'heritage'. The Round Table was actually a palm-sized poor apology on which neither Patwant could rest his turban or Manu Singhvi his case.

Vir makes for a slick anchorperson. He initiates, directs, guides and involves disparate and desperate view-points. Manu Singhvi was just coming from a hearing in which Syed Shafi on behalf of INTACH had petitioned for removal of the illegal construction at the Jama Masjid. Patwant Singh had petitioned strongly against the use of Lodi Gardens as a playground of the money-spinning fashion industry represented by the Ritu Beri's of the fashion world.

They all discussed heritage. But the 'heritage' they spoke about concerned very few in a country where many villages still do not have drinking water or electricity. I chipped in to say that in an earlier incarnation as an INTACH worker, I was once accosted by an agitated Brajwasi in the Mathura-Vrindavan region who said "Delhi does not listen to us. Look at these sewers, no one has come to clean them." I was appalled that they expected Rajiv Gandhi, who was then the chairperson of INTACH, in addition to being the PM of the country, to come and clean *nalas*. I asked for a broom and started cleaning upon which the whole neighbourhood was so embarrassed that they promptly started sweeping. I felt a bit like Gandhi who asked Kasturba, his better half, to help maintain hygiene. My better half uses toilet paper so I found the parallel, unparalleled.

Unparalleled, never-seen-before-boom, that is what India is seeing today. All this liberalisation has made this poor land breathless. It is now quite alien to those of us who enjoyed its languid pace. We were a peaceful lot. Time was cyclic. What could not be done today, could be left for another day. Kabir's *kal kare so aaaj ar* was more paradigm than poetry. Today, it is changing quickly. All this cellular calling, paging, faxing, phoning business has changed the way we relate to time. We rarely rushed ourselves, even at the risk of being called slow and inefficient. We took great pride in gentle courtesies, afternoon siestas and leisurely manners. To think of a Nawab rushing in a car to the airport to catch a flight is indeed a flight of fancy, although I was witness to a scene at Charles De Gaulle airport, Paris, where a Sheikh missed a flight to JFK, New York, and hired a Concorde to fly him, *only* him, all the way in time for a meeting. Of course, the fact that fuel from his shiekdom filled the belly of the plane must have helped him underwrite the costs. Sheikhs apart, are we culturally and attitudinally, ready for all this speed? Are we on the brink of a national by-pass? What happens to our philosophy of life? It is rather disturbing — all this mad-rush to



nowhere. No time for anyone or anything.

It is already a bit late but where are the thinkers, the statesmen, the conscience-keepers of India? Has greed reduced all of them and made them seek only the Chandraswami-type of enlightenment? And nothing beyond St. Kitts? Where are those who could and did make a difference? There is only one Mother Teresa. India needs a new vision. No, this piece is not sponsored by Sony or Panasonic or BPL (although, I wish it was, because our cheapy editor has never paid me anything to write all this!) I do it out of sheer commitment to my squinted views. With a hope that someone somewhere sees it and makes sense out of all the gobbledygook. (And makes cheques too which are welcome, preferably in US dollars), payable to my un-numbered Swiss account.) On this optimistic note, I rest my case. ☞

**A**shish Khokar finds life in India and Indians totally amusing. He loves to laugh it off but deep inside, there is the sadness for a country getting steadily eroded of its own ways. He is a full time writer anyway, so he does not know what more to do, other than being the dance critic for *The Times Of India* and columnist for *First City*, in addition to being a biographer, photographer and cultural administrator who served the Sahitya Kala Parishad, Festivals of India in France, Sweden, Germany and China; INTACH and Martand Singh Consultants. He also scripts and anchors TV programmes on the arts and edits a bi-monthly, *Rasamanjari*.



# BOOK REVIEWS

## TREASURED ISLANDS ! AN ENVIRONMENTAL HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS IN THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

SUNITA RAO

KALPAVRIKSH/ANET, PRICE NOT MENTIONED

SUMAN MISHRA

*Some isle with the sea's silence in it,  
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas,  
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!*

Robert Browning, *Pippa Passes*

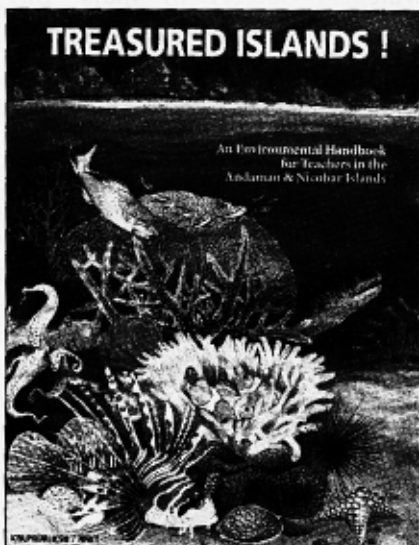
**T**hree hundred and six of these 'isles' form the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, little mountain peaks jutting out of the sea, off the eastern coast of India, in the Bay of Bengal. *Treasured Islands* is an exploration of this fine example of a tropical coral island ecosystem, a handbook for teachers that attempts at a more involved awareness about the islands amongst it's children.

This book is researched and written by Sunita Rao of Kalpavriksh (an environmental education group based in Delhi) in collaboration with ANET (The Andaman and Nicobars Environmental Action Team). ANET, incidentally, is a division of the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT), and has been involved in wildlife research, conservation and education in the islands since 1988.

The book itself deals with each of the basic ecosystems of the islands in separate sections. The ocean — with the coral and coral reef zone; the inter-tidal area — with the rocky shore/sandy beaches and mangrove zones and

finally, the tropical forest area ecosystem. The author has carefully avoided technical jargon and writes in a friendly, chatty way. Specific (scientific) names of the local flora have been avoided in favour of more colloquial ones. The book remains simple and accessible to any reader.

The various sections aim at initiating action at the student level against ecological degradation. The chapter, *Saving Our Timeless Treasures* talks about endangered species, species endemic to the Islands and the concept of ecological balance, while *Indigenous Humans on the Islands* reviews the tribal population, stressing on their age old sustained co-existence with the ecosystems. *Island Alert*, the concluding section is a flood of ideas of action that children can take to in order to make a difference in the fast degrading ecological scenario. From starting a club or a wall magazine or a 'clean-up beach project', creating compost pits — a whole host of suggestions have been made available !



Liberally and interestingly illustrated, the book has made clever use of students' participatory activities. Exhaustive descriptions of forty five of these activities in the book are likely to go down well with both teachers and students. The activities are easily implementable.

As of now, a translation into the local language of Nicobar Islands is planned for the book.

Sunita Rao of Kalpavriksh who is

responsible for the co-ordination, direction and text of the book has been working for some time now on environmental education and awareness raising.

*Treasured Islands* is most certainly a sincere example of a breakthrough in conventional education methods. Congratulations to Sunita Rao for authoring such a delightful and at the same time informative manual! The apex bodies of education in this country should sponsor more of these sincere and pioneering efforts! ❧

*Suman Mishra is doing her 2nd year, Sociology, at Miranda House College, Delhi University.*

## LIVING SCULPTURE CLASSICAL INDIAN CULTURE AS DEPICTED IN SCULPTURE AND LITERATURE

PRABHAKAR BEGDE

SAGAR PUBLICATIONS, RS.1600/-

SUBHASHINI ARYAN

Since hoary antiquity, when the foundations of Indian civilisation were laid down by our *rishis* and *munis*, Indians were made to think that knowledge (*gnana*) is like a huge tree, and the large number of disciplines of art, architecture, science and technology, as well as their offshoots are all inter-related. The *rishis* did not compartmentalise knowledge like our British *gurus*, since whose advent and domination, we Indians have been compelled to turn our backs on everything Indian. This is the trend even fifty years after their departure. Little effort has been made by intellectuals to change the course, because in the forefront stand those intellectuals who owe their top positions to that class consciously created by the British rulers to serve their ends.

In spite of this unfortunate and continuing trend, there are a handful of Indians who feel deeply for India's

civilisation, and make their voices heard. The book under review is an effort in that direction.

Prabhakar Begde is an architect by profession, and conversant with history of traditional Indian architecture. Sculpture, (here we are not concerned with modern Indian sculpture that has no roots in the country) is an integral part of Indian temple architecture. To view it as an independent entity would be erroneous. Secondly, like traditional Indian painting, sculpture is so deeply interconnected with Sanskrit and vernacular literature that it is difficult to understand the multi-faceted aspects of both traditional Indian painting and sculpture. This is precisely what Begde is set out to do in the present book — make known the background and context of Indian architectonic sculpture with the help of a profusion of literary texts, some of which are not so well known. Decades ago, C. Sivaramamurti the erudite art historian and Sanskrit scholar, had started this trend. His works are replete with allusions to Sanskrit literary texts which he knew by heart. If one showed him a painting or a sculptural relief, in no time would he chant the relevant *shloka* or *kavya* associated with it. It was a good sign, but of far greater importance is the need to focus attention on the aesthetics of the work. This has not been highlighted by very many scholars.

Begde concerns himself in the present book with ancient and medieval period sculptures, i.e. when the largest number of Hindu temples were erected because of the religious impetus of earning merit or *punya*, largely in the Gupta period and the Pratiharas after them. But sculptural activity dates from a much earlier period, going back to Indus Valley and the Mauryan Age. The wide gap between these has not been filled due to insufficient archaeological excavations.

The contents of the present book are spread over seven chapters. The introduction is followed by a discussion of the *rasa* theory, on which is based the structure of traditional Indian aesthetics. Begde, however, confines himself to *shringara rasa*, the king of the nine *rasas*, which has given rise to

so much creativity. Several volumes can be devoted only to this subject. Thereafter, in the next five chapters, he deals with apparel, ornaments, coiffures, cosmetics, music and dance, and finally nature. Each chapter follows a standard methodology — the discussion is developed in a chronological order, from the Vedic period onwards. What I appreciate most about Begde's methodology is that he has followed the correct chronological sequence: the Vedic period, the Indus valley period which, in my opinion, is decidedly post-Vedic. But I am not inclined to place the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* after the Indus valley period; they ante-date the Indus valley period. This chronology should be adopted in our history books.

In each chapter, the relevant literary allusions are corroborated not only by illustrations at the end, but by accompanying outline sketches by Ripin Kalra.

Very often, a commoner visiting ancient Hindu temple sites is appalled by the depiction of nymphs or celestial dancers and musicians, and more by sculptures of erotic couples. Why do they figure on a sacred structure? — is the question they ask. They forget that Hindu philosophy is based on four strong pillars — *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, and *kama* is equated with *moksha*, because the experience of oneness is the same.

An important hallmark of this book is the accent on Indian philosophy, rather, Hindu philosophical systems which is not a part of our educational curriculum. If this was so, most laymen would be in a better position to understand the essence of Indian art and its culture. In this respect, Begde's book is useful, in that any lay reader can enjoy it. Further, it is written in simple and lucid language. ❧

*Dr. Subhashini Aryan is a noted art historian and author of a dozen books on Himalayan art and architecture. She is also an expert on north Indian temple art and architecture.*

## ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE IN INDIA

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PRABHAKAR BEGDE

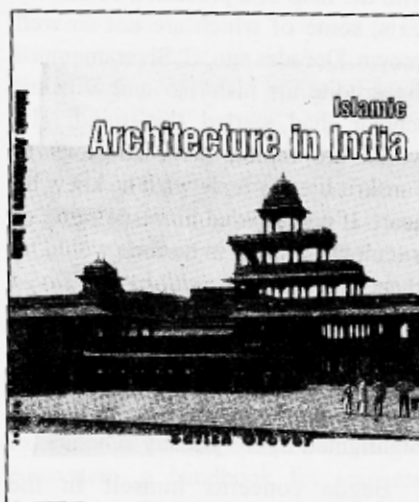
### OLD WINE IN A NEW BOTTLE

Most prevailing views on Indian art and architecture were formed by a few influential writers who wrote the first histories on this subject. James Fergusson (1808-1886 AD) was greatly influenced by the ideas of Ruskin (who, though he approved of the craftsmen's sense of colour and form, abhorred Indian sculpture, painting and architecture as representing an 'un-Christian' ethos), compiled the first comprehensive history of *Indian and Eastern Architecture* in 1876. This was a major landmark in South Asian historical art scholarship and continues to exercise lasting impact on almost all subsequent works till date.

Fergusson equated the study of architectural history with ethnic, geographical and political analysis of building form. He got trapped into labyrinthine cobwebs of religion, cast, creed and dynasty. He exhibited a partisan attitude towards the Saracenic style and credited the Saracenic rulers with having introduced the "true arch" into South Asia(n) architecture. His inconsistent classification and Saracenic prejudices were perpetuated through historians such as Percy Brown and others who have shown the tendency to divide Indian architecture into two different and distinct periods, Hindu (which also includes Jain and Buddhist) period and Muslim period. This view advertently or inadvertently perpetuates the myth that there was nothing really similar in the architecture of these two periods.

Scholars such as E.B. Havell and Ananda Coomaraswamy, for the first time, challenged Fergusson's concept by emphasizing the necessity of undertaking a critique of Indian

architecture and art in terms of the canons of its artistic traditions. It is more significant because it came at a time when important trends arising from colonialism could be identified - the Eurocentric attitude of their precursors, that is, Fergusson, Ruskin, Cole etc and their tendency to look outside India for sources of influence on her art and architecture - a typical imperialistic attitude that denied their subjects the right to their own heritage. This was mainly because India on British dossiers was Muslim India. During the early years of British rule in India this was inevitable and understandable. But Fergusson could never rise above his prejudices and the tenor of his writings on Indian architecture was that 'it cannot, of course, be for a moment, contended



that India ever reached the intellectual supremacy of Greece or the moral greatness of Rome.' The history of Indian architecture has therefore remained where Fergusson left it, 'not a history of Indian life', 'but a museum of antiquities wrongly labelled', as rightly observed by Havell who argued for a logical classification of Indian monumental heritage on a chronological basis.

The reason for this rather long preamble to the review of this book is obvious. Mr Grover has already written two volumes of Indian architecture on Hindu and Muslim periods in the tradition of Fergusson and Percy Brown, and one fails to understand why this book again on Islamic Architecture,

specially since it has nothing new to project.

The book is divided into eight chapters. It starts with the conquest of North India by Arabs and Afghans at the beginning of this millennium. It gives us a discourse on the 'architectural politics and heroism' of Islamic builders till the twilight of the Mughal period. As always with this type of classification, it starts with the building of the Quwwatul-Islam mosque with the material of twenty-seven destroyed temples of the Rajput period, which is accepted by all concerned. At the same time, while describing the Qutb Minar, the author does not venture to enlighten us about its method of construction specially, because it is supposed to be (if at all) the first new major monument of Saracenic builders in India. There is a lot more to this structure than meets the eye.

Rajput architecture in India had its roots in the Indian ethos and has grown in stature contemporaneously with so-called Muslim architecture. Planning and designing of palace complexes were given special importance in all canons of Indian architecture which were compiled much earlier than the Islamic conquest of North India. Unless the architectural fraternity the world-over is acquainted with this literature, it will not be able to appreciate the fact that Indian architecture maintained an unbroken tradition while assimilating and digesting external influences. A fact that must be noted is that Indian art and art activity had a long and unbroken tradition dating back to the Maurya period. A curious student of Indian architecture would do well to read the description of King Harshavardhana's palace, in Banabhatta's *Harshacharita* to understand and appreciate its likeness to the so-called Muslim palace complexes at Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri and Rajput palace complexes at Chittor, Gwalior, Datia and elsewhere. It is about time we realize that it is only Indian architecture that flourished in this subcontinent and not Hindu, Buddhist, Jain or Muslim. It is therefore essential to study Indian architecture on a chronological basis. It is only then



that 'the politics of architecture' during the Muslim period could be understood.

Grover tells us about an 'all-India architectural competition' supposedly held by Shahjahan for the Taj Mahal. I

am deeply amused by this flight of fancy which has no historical evidence. Considering that we frequently come across names of Persians, Italians, French and even English, except Indian,

perhaps he could have jumped one step further and called it an 'international competition.'

To sum it up the book is a classic case of old wine in a new bottle. ☞

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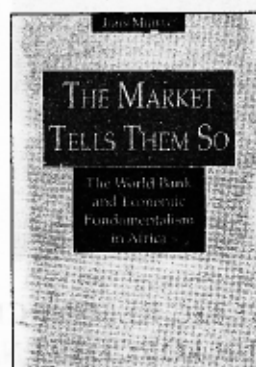
### SLAVE AND ENCLAVE The Political Ecology of Equatorial Africa

The Equatorial Africa of this study — Gabon, the Congo and the Central African Republic — has a long, sad history of slavery and the depredations of foreign forest product extraction. For the forest communities of the region, the slave wars, conquest, forced resettlement and labour in extractive industries and the lumber camps has meant the undermining of their ways of life. Deprived of rights and marginal to national economies built up on oil, timber, coffee and diamonds, these people still find themselves deprived of a political voice or control of their destinies.

The forests are not yet suffering the accelerated rates of forest loss common in West Africa, yet, as this disturbing new report from the World Rainforest Movement shows, the forests are defenceless. Local communities have been deprived of control of their ancestral forests while the States that now claim authority over them have become little more than predatory instruments for the enrichment of ruling elites and their foreign backers.

Leaked studies carried out for the World Bank and published here for the first time, show how the foreign dominated timber companies act with complete contempt for the law. Hope lies in the region's movements for political liberalisation, the still tentative resurgence of community authority and the re-awakening of long-submerged indigenous traditions of equality and justice.

**Author of the book:**  
Marcus Colchester



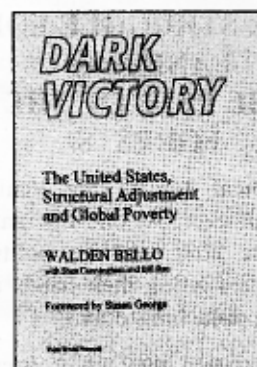
### THE MARKET TELLS THEM SO

**The World Bank and Economic  
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Structural adjustment is not just an economic strategy designed to assist countries in addressing technical problems related to trade, growth and the balance of payments. It embodies also, this author argues, a social, cultural and even quasi-religious vision for the remaking of Africa and the world. John Mihevc focuses on three aspects of structural adjustment in particular. He provides an entirely innovative characterization of World Bank thinking as essentially

fundamentalist in the scale of its ambitions, its ignoring of the complexities of social reality, and its denial of the legitimacy of contrary views of development. He gives a trenchant account of the criticisms which World Bank policies have elicited. And he considers the response from African churches and social movements representing voices of resistance and providing an alternative vision.

**Author of the book:**  
John Mihevc



### DARK VICTORY

**The United States, Structural  
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Hunger and malnutrition stalk the countries of the South. Over the last twenty years, as the populations of Third World countries have increased, so too has mass poverty on a grotesque scale. In this fiercely critical study of Western aid giving, Walden Bello offers a persuasive argument that re-colonisation of the Third World has been carried out through the agencies of the International Banks. Bello argues that the Reagan administration came

to power with an agenda to 'discipline the Third World' and the consequences of such a policy has resulted in lower barriers to imports, the removal of restrictions on foreign investments, privatisation of state owned activities, a reduction in social welfare spending, wage cuts and devaluation of local currencies. Recipients of any lending from the World Bank, or any other Western agency, have been forced to accept such policies, with disastrous consequences.

**Author of the book:**  
**Walden Bellow with**  
**Shea Cunningham and Bill Rau**



## THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND AND THE FATE OF THE FORESTS

The tropical forests are vanishing faster than ever. At one international conference after another, politicians and planners wring their hands at the world's approaching doom.

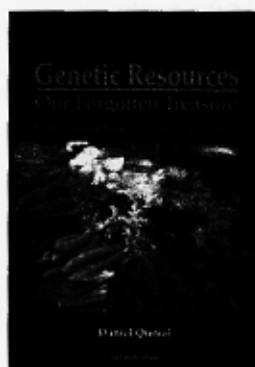
Deforestation, they tell us, is caused by 'poverty', 'over-population' and 'under-development'. The solutions are therefore obvious — fewer people and more development. This book challenges these assumptions.

Based on six country studies from Latin America, Asia and Africa to illustrate the real complexity of the problem and the diversity of situations that exist, this book shows how land concentration, land speculation and landlessness are the main causes of improvident land use. Poor people, denied land and livelihood, are being forced into the forests in ever increasing numbers for sheer survival, often

encouraged by government and development agency funding. Meanwhile the lands they have been forced to abandon are turned over to agribusiness producing cash crops for export.

Agrarian reform must be moved to the top of the global agenda. Without land and food security, rural communities will become increasingly destitute and impoverished and vulnerable ecosystems will be destroyed. Local people must be allowed to regain control over their land and their economies, and Third World debt cancelled, if the twin problems of poverty and environmental destruction are to be tackled.

**Edited by:**  
**Marcus Colchester and**  
**Larry Lohmann**



## GENETIC RESOURCES OUR FORGOTTEN TREASURE

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**Author of the book:**  
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Final sections of the source book are devoted to a history of organic farming in India; addresses of individuals and institutions working to promote the field; descriptions and addresses of green shops and suppliers of

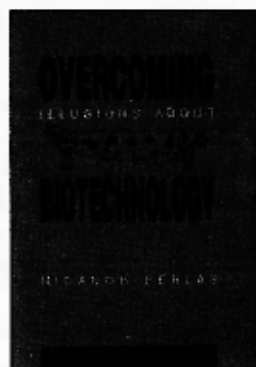
non-chemical inputs like organic fertilisers etc.

The Source Book ends with a resume of the organic farming scenario worldwide, written by Shirin Gadhia, one of the pioneers of the organic farming movement in the country.

Edited by:

Claude Alvares

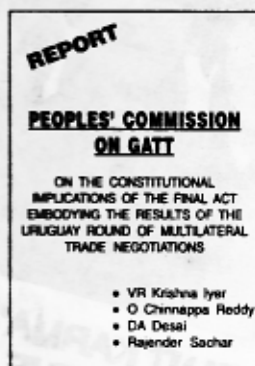
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## INSTANT KARMA'S GONNA GET YOU! - THE BEATLES PRASEEDA GOPINATH

*Instant karma's gonna get you...  
Why in the world are we here?*

**C**ried John Lennon in his 1970 solo single, *Instant Karma*. A question often asked by the most famous rock band in history – the Beatles. Their search for an expanded consciousness and the possibilities of a deeper awareness led them to check out Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the guru of the social anarchists of Europe and America, the baby boomers of the sixties and seventies. John Lennon and Paul McCartney and George Harrison were fashionably influenced by Indian philosophy and not just by their association with Pt. Ravi Shankar.

Harrison, those who are Beatle watchers will know, became an icon for ISKON, the Krishna Consciousness Movement. The Beatles' interest in things mystical got translated into several of their lyrics, hummed and strummed for a couple of decades after that and surprisingly, till date. *Karma*, *mantra* and *dharma*, became anglicised words and found favour with those getting increasingly disenchanted with the machine. That long-haired, unwashed, chillum smoking generation called the flower children – beginning of the peace and environment movement.

*Across the Universe*, nominally a Lennon-McCartney song was actually written by John. It talks about the idea of transcendence and the seamless unity of all creation

*Words are flowing out  
like endless rain into a  
paper cup*

*They slither while, as  
they slip away across  
the universe.*

From the here  
and now, words  
travel into the  
distance, to  
merge with the  
infinite.

*Images of  
broken light which  
dance before me like a million  
eyes*

*They call me on and on across the  
universe*

Light is the foremost symbol of enlightenment – *Tamaso maam jyotirgamaya* (lead me from darkness into the light). In this case, light is 'broken', fragmented but nevertheless present, the hope of being enlightened being articulated.

*And of course, there is the ecstasy of  
limitless, undying love which  
shines around me  
Like a million suns  
And calls me on and on across  
the universe..*

Echoes of the Krishna philosophy, the earth as family, *vasudaiva kutumbakam...*

The music of the Beatles emphasises what the words suggest. The backing vocals comprising a chorus of voices hymning seem to fill space and time within the song. Sometimes there is the haunting sound of the sitar....swirling in some strange realm of awareness.

The repetition of *Om* at the end of every verse gives the impression of a submergence, a surrender, the washing over of all sounds with the *Om* sound.

Then the assertion, *Nothing's going to change my world* placed at the end of the chorus and repeated at the end of the song. This beautiful song of oneness presaged John's later undying and

optimistic belief in peace, 'brotherhood of man' (*Imagine*), a belief which eventually cost him his life. John always remained something of an iconoclast.

*Within You, Without You*, the core of the Beatles' seminal album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts' Club Band* is another overt expression of their forays into spirituality. This is George's endorsement not only of Indian philosophy but also its music, though the Beatles' producer, George Martin calls it a 'dirge' and rather 'dreary'.

*And the time will come when you see  
we're all one*

*And life flows on within you and  
without you*

The idea of the individual being blinded by the 'wall of illusion, never glimpsing the truth' is directly stated in *Within You, Without You*, almost with a sense of urgency. George warns against those who 'gain the world and lose their soul'. At the heart of the song is the singer's despair at those who do not or cannot see

*They can't see  
Are you one of them?*

The voice and the *dilruba* rise to the same wailing pitch. Yet hope is not lost as 'it's all within yourself'. Echoes of *advaita*.

But for all their didacticism, they never forget to take themselves lightly, laughing or snickering at the end of a song as they did often. This endeared them to an audience for whom their lyrics could sometimes get a bit too heavy.

The Beatles could well be accused of being 'pop mystics' in an era of drug induced altered states of consciousness. Yet, their all time appeal proves that they did try and scratch the surface of banal existence, sometimes a trifle irreverently. But always, there was this genuine desire to inquire into the human condition. John's *Instant Karma* points out (indirectly) the dangers of 'instant-ness' for sure it's 'gonna get you'. ☸

*Praseeda Gopinath is doing  
her M.A. Finals in English  
Literature at Delhi University.*

## SALABHANJIKA - 4

### KALPAVRIKSHA



*Vrikshadevata offering food and drink to a wayfarer.  
Bodhgaya c. 100 BC.*

Tree worship was probably the earliest and the most commonly prevailing form of religion in India. Trees have always been treated as though they were endowed with a soul and a heart that weeps with grief and laughs with joy.

In the *Jatakas* (Buddhist tales), tree spirits play a major role and are worshipped with perfumes, flowers and food. They dwell in many kinds of trees, but the banyan, sal and silk-cotton trees are their preferred abodes. It is also the abode of the *vanadevata*, or the god of trees and forests. The *vanadevatas* are regarded as kindly spirits always intent on doing good, and with their supernatural

powers they could shower gifts on people.

This kind of *vrikshadevata* (tree god) is also described as *Kalpataru* or *Kalpavriksha* in Sanskrit and Pali literature as one who feeds, clothes and is in every way most kindly, attending to the needs of passers-by seeking its shade, and laden with wealth manifested in pots and bags arranged around its roots.

In the *Meghaduta*, Kalidasa enumerates all the materials required for feminine adornment that were supplied by *Kalpavriksha* thus: "The one tree that satiates all desires, providing women with all the four-fold aids of beauty; a decorative dress, wine which enlivens their glances, lovely jewellery and fresh flowers with delicate tendrils for the head and enticing lac paint for the feet".

Every line of Kalidasa's description of the *kalpavriksha* can be seen in the Bharhut sculpture, though it ante-dated his times. Here the divine tree is often represented with soft silks, *dukula* (drapery) *hara* (garlands) *angada* (anklets), *kundala* (earrings) and other ornaments. The rail-copping at Bharhut is decorated with the meandering *kalpavalli* or creeper motif.

The *kalpavriksha* is one of the noblest celestial concepts, having emerged as a gem that rose out of the cosmic churning of the ocean along with the moon and the goddess of prosperity. It is therefore called *surarajavriksha* by Kalidasa meaning the tree of the sovereign of celestials. A *vriksharaja* is the lord among noble trees.

Prabhakar Begde

Illustration: *Living Sculpture* by the same author



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